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ST. AUGUSTINE'S CONVERSION

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ST. AUGUSTINE: ON THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER.

THE LETTERS OF ST. AUGUSTINE.

ST. AUGUSTINE'S CONVERSION

AN OUTLINE OF HIS DEVELOPMENT TO THE TIME OF HIS ORDINATION

BY

W. J. SPARROW SIMPSON, D.D.

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IMMORTAL MEMORY OF

ST. AUGUSTINE

BISHOP OF HIPPO AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE ON

AUGUST 28, 430

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VERISSIMUM EST PIETATIS EXORDIUM

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PREFACE

UNTIL the present century it has always been the custom, when describing Augustine's development, to rely almost entirely on the pages of his Confessions. In recent years, however, there has come a change. The higher criticism has been applied to the records of his career. It was, of course, always quite well known that the Confessions were not written at the time of the experience of conversion which they relate. Not until some thirteen years had elapsed was the process recorded. In those thirteen years Augustine had in many ways considerably advanced. He had become an ascetic, a priest, and a Bishop of the Catholic Church. He had grown greatly in knowledge of and familiarity with the doctrines of the Faith. He had come to know by experience what at the time before his conversion he only knew as a theory. Consequently, criticism set itself to inquire how far the record in the Confessions represented Augustine's actual state at the time when the conversion took place. Was the record modified by his subsequent experiences? Did he read back into the earlier period what in reality only came to be his mind in the later period of his life? The modern critic pointed out that there were still preserved a whole series of documents, dialogues, discussions, reflections, devotional utterances and letters, precious autobiographical fragments scattered here and there in the dedication of his early writings; many of these belonging to the period before Augustine

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was received into the Catholic Church by the Baptismal Sacrament, while others were composed in the two or three years which followed after. Every one of them was written while he was still a layman. These works were contemporary with the events. They registered his changing moods and intellectual conceptions in the interval long before the Confessions were written.

If therefore a really accurate account of the process of Augustine's intellectual development and of its various stages was to be obtained, all these earlier documents must be carefully investigated, since these were the original materials for a study of his career. Criticism has further pointed out that the Confessions themselves, invaluable, indispensable as of course they are, do not constitute anything like a full autobiography. They were not written with that idea.

The following account of St. Augustine's intellectual development is accordingly constructed on the critical principles just explained. Full use is made of the earlier writings, supplemented of course by the Confessions. But especial care has been taken not to ascribe to him by anticipation beliefs before the time when he really gave assent to them. The various stages have been traced: his inherited but fragmentary and inadequately assimilated religion, his dualism, his agnosticism, his Neoplatonist philosophy, then, finally, his slow and gradual assent to the religion of authority, Christ as the supreme revelation, and the Catholic Church as its divinely constituted exponent.

A considerable number of recent critics, chiefly Continental, both German and French, have been at work on Augustine's intellectual growth. As was to be expected, they differ very greatly in opinion concerning the historical value of the record of his Confessions. Some critics are sceptical as to whether that wonderful record represents

his real religious state at the time. Others are confident that on the whole they do. A study of his works and of a number of his critics leads us to conclude that his conversion was an assent to the authority of Christ and of the Church; but that, while this assent was an implicit assent to the contents of the Faith, time and reflection were needed to enable that wonderfully powerful mind to realize in any full degree what the implications of those contents actually were. The development of this great intelligence from darkness to light it is the purpose of the following chapters to analyze and explain.

It is superfluous to say that the intellectual, moral and religious development of the ablest personality which Christendom has possessed since St. Paul amply rewards the most devoted study. The variety of the stages through which he passed, the process of the transitions, is of fascinating interest. And the whole development has not only a historic and a human value, but is also at the same time a very real guide and encouragement amid the perplexities of the modern mind. It reminds us how ancient many a problem is which our century has a curious habit of regarding as something quite original and new. Of course, we often find that his outlook is in some ways not ours, and that his arguments in certain cases would no longer convince. But, amid whatever changes the centuries have produced, there is a depth and a wisdom in immeasurable sayings and reflections which must remain among the treasures of humanity for all time.

The quotations from Dr. Bigg's translation of the Confessions are made by kind permission of Messrs. Methuen & Co., Ltd.

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ST. AUGUSTINE'S CONVERSION

CHAPTER I

AUGUSTINE'S EDUCATION

THE obscure town called Tagaste in Numidia is redeemed from oblivion solely by the fact that it was the birthplace of the man who probably more than any other since the Apostles has guided the course of Christian thought.

By common consent Augustine is acknowledged to be the greatest mind in Christendom since St. Paul. His intellectual development is as remarkable as any on record for the series of theories which he adopted and rejected. His conversion is the most conspicuous both for the brilliancy of his gifts and for the knowledge we possess of his character; the process of his conversion being far better known to us than that of any other convert to the faith. His elaborate self-analysis and the profusion of his writings enable us to follow him stage after stage to a degree unrivalled in any other religious biography. All these things make him an unceasing attraction, and the literature which has accumulated about him is simply overwhelming.

Augustine's conversion is best approached by a study of his home. When the relative influence of heredity and environment has been defined it may be possible to ascertain what Augustine owed to each. Dominating everything else was the influence of his mother. There never

was a man more indebted to his mother's character and religion. Indeed, his conversion can never be thoroughly understood apart from her. What Augustine would have been without Monnica it is impossible to conceive.

Monnica was brought up from childhood in a Christian home. She owed her training, not so much to her mother as to an old servant in the family, who had been her father's nurse in infancy. The servant was evidently a character, highly valued for her excellent influence, and trusted with the training of her master's daughters, over whom she exercised a strict authority. She firmly refused to allow the children to drink anything except at meals, not even water, however thirsty they might be: a Spartan discipline in the climate of Africa. She over-ruled any pleading to the contrary with the remark: "You drink water now, because wine is not within your reach. But when you have homes of your own with storerooms and cellars, water will not be good enough for you, but the habit of drinking will prevail."

But Monnica, in spite of the servant's ruling, fell into the habit of wine drinking at an early age. Gaining credit for her abstemiousness, she was sent by her parents to the wine cellar, where she began to help herself, and gradually took more and more. However, a servant girl saw her, and when Monnica one day criticized the girl for some neglect, the servant turned round upon her young mistress and called her a drunkard. That criticism shamed and cured her.[1]

Monnica was married while very young; and in spite of the fact that both her parents were Christians, she was married to a pagan. Mixed marriage between pagan and Christian was common in those days. The Apostolic ideal was ignored. But it involved painful trials to herself, and of course it affected her children.

[1] *Conf.*, ix. 18.

Her husband, Patricius, was a man of some position in civic affairs, although by no means prosperous. He was a *Decurion*, or member of the Municipal Council of Tagaste. This was a title of honour rather than an indication of wealth; indeed the office was one from which men of modest means would naturally shrink, because it involved financial liabilities, and sometimes ruinous expense. Patricius was in friendly relation with leading citizens. He owned a house, some fields, and kept several servants. But he was well acquainted with the anxieties entailed on the possession of narrow resources. In after years, when at the height of his ecclesiastical fame, the son of Patricius objected to being presented by his admirers with a costly vesture on the ground that such things were inappropriate for a poor man's son. He would not have it said that he lived more luxuriously as a priest than he could afford to do in the home of his youth.[1]

There were several servants in the house, who were only too successful at first in making mischief between the young wife and her mother-in-law, who resided with them. But Monnica's discretion and gentleness and reasonableness completely won the mother-in-law, who vindicated the wife's character to the husband, as the mischief-makers found to their cost.

Patricius was a difficult man to live with. There is no question who was master in that house. He was afflicted with an ungovernable temper, and opposition made him worse. When in a passion he could be violent. Moreover, his morals were irregular, and his wife had serious cause for grief. The married women of the place, knowing the husband's character, remarked that in spite of everything this man and his wife were somehow never publicly estranged, there were no scenes in that household, and no indications of domestic quarrels. Inquisitiveness

[1] *Serm.*, 356, 13.

was busy to ascertain the cause. The explanation is that Monnica showed extraordinary tact in dealing with her husband's rages. She said nothing until the storm was past. Then, awaiting a favourable moment, she gave such reasonable account of what had upset him that he had nothing more to say. The sweet reasonableness of the woman won the man's respect. And when other women complained that their husbands were not so manageable as hers, she chaffed them mercilessly for their caprice and their domineering, wilful ways.

Monnica was only twenty-two when Augustine was born. As he grew to boyhood he became subject to two contrasted influences. Paganism and Christianity were both represented in his home, in the persons of his father and his mother. But there was very little deliberate conflict of religions. His father's paganism was conventional rather than personal, a matter of inheritance rather than of conviction. All the household except his father believed. The dominant influence in the home, the only live conviction, was Christian. Indeed, the pagan element yielded in process of time to the superiority of Monnica's example. She drew her husband, toward the close of his life, to accept her religion, and to become a convert to the Church. After that conversion his morals were reformed, and she had no longer to endure the dishonour and the shame which his previous disloyalty had inflicted.

Within this home the boy Augustine grew up a witness to his mother's religious ascendency. He found that the ladies of the place called on Monnica and confided to her their quarrels with other women. She had to hear, in confidence, first from one side and then from the other, their mutual hostilities and dislikes. She heard the aggrieved reckon up the faults of the absent, or report, not without exaggerations and distortions, what the object of

their jealousy and anger was supposed to have said. Monnica quietly listened, and buried in silence what she heard. She was never known to gossip, or betray a confidence. She was gifted with a singular persuasiveness. She often became a peace-maker between resentful and quarrelsome women, and restored to friendship those who were not on speaking terms. This amiable and enviable grace—so Christian and none too prevalent—evidently moved and deeply impressed her son. Was it his mother's gracious influence which he had in mind in after years, when he inscribed in the common room of his home the warning, " Let him who speaks evil of the absent understand that there is no place for him here "?

The boy was attracted by his mother's religion, and not at all by that of his father. His father, indeed, did nothing intentionally to hinder his belief, whatever he may have done by example. But the mother's deeply religious character prevailed. Her influence is to be traced in his childish prayers. She taught him where to appeal in the troubles of his early life. He gained from her a strong belief in God, which never entirely deserted him even in his most unbelieving hours. He heard, doubtless from his mother, while yet a boy, about eternal life promised through the humility of our Lord God, who descended to our pride. And at the centre of the boy's religion was implanted the name of Christ. In after years, when under the influence of non-Christian philosophic systems of thought, the one thing which diminished their influence over him was that the name of Christ was not there. That name, with whatever elements of Christian doctrine it may have represented, he imbibed from his mother. And he could not be entirely and finally satisfied where that name was not.

There is a wonderful capacity in youth for forming shrewd estimates of the character of its elders. Monnica's

son possessed this capacity in a very high degree. He had the penetration to perceive that his mother's motives about his future were more worldly at first than they afterwards became. To quote his singular reflection about her: "Though she had fled from the midst of Babylon, she walked more slowly in its outskirts." By which curious phrase he appears to mean that she was for some time more influenced by ambitions about his worldly success than her religion permitted. She was prompted more by natural affection than by spiritual ideals. Monnica had a sharp-eyed critic in her home—in the person of a son, keenly conscious of a saintly mother's inconsistencies. But also he appreciated her growth in Christian grace. As she became more and more religious-minded she came to value earthly distinctions less and less.

Monnica was unmistakably a woman of tenacious purpose and strength of will. She was frequently more than a match for her son's vacillations. He admits that her replies were more telling than his assertions. She was a much firmer character than he. Beneath her gentleness of manner there was a quiet strength which won its way over more emotional and turbulent natures. There is no trace in Monnica of excitable nerves, or of the emotionalism by which her son was sorely troubled. Whenever she appears she is uniformly serene, gifted with ready natural wit and shrewdness, always concerned for others, and invariably devoted to her son.

Apparently Augustine was not taught as a child to read the Scriptures. There is no clear trace in his youth of any real familiarity with the Gospels and the life of Christ. Years afterwards, he read St. Paul's Epistles with an air of novelty. In his nineteenth year he was ignorant of the Apostle's teaching. Later still, when he was no less than thirty years of age, he read those writings as documents of which the contents were new to him. In after

life he criticised with severity the system of education to which he had been subjected, which filled his boyish mind with pagan literature while it left him unfamiliar with the sacred books of his religion. It is possible that Monnica's own knowledge of Scripture was limited. It is not clear what Christian books she gave her son to read. The Christian literature of the North African Church was extensive and famous. But there is no means to ascertain how much of it was familiar to the Christian community at Tagaste. The fact is that the Church of that place, during Augustine's boyhood and youth, was in a poor condition. It was overrun by the Donatist sect, who, indeed, outnumbered the Catholics. Weakened seriously by these secessions, and constantly distracted by the fierce and even deadly fanaticism of the sect, whose extremists marched about the country in marauding gangs, making incendiary attacks on their orthodox neighbours, the Church was unable to hold its own; and there were prudential reasons why a pagan should not be attracted towards these warring communions, and why it was difficult for adequate instruction to be given. Priests and Bishops went in terror of their lives through the ferocious antagonism of their fellow Christians. Such were the surroundings of Augustine's home.

Augustine was signed in childhood with the sign of the Cross, and placed among the catechumens of the Church. But he was not baptized, although during a serious illness in boyhood he begged hard that this sacrament might be conferred on him. They certainly would not have allowed him to die unbaptized. Indeed in a crisis of the illness, when recovery seemed doubtful, they were proposing to baptize him. But as the crisis passed, the Sacrament was delayed. And since he soon recovered it was put off altogether. Fear of the more deadly consequences of post-baptismal sin led Monnica to think postponement the

wiser course. He was therefore permitted to grow up unbaptized.[1]

That his baptism was indefinitely postponed on the ground that he was getting better, throws curious light on contemporary sacramental ideas. This postponement was evidently Monnica's wish. Reluctance to approach the baptismal waters was a widely prevalent inference from the doctrine of the Sacrament. Baptism, being no less than the reception of a new nature, changed the soul's relation to God, and changed it for ever. Post-baptismal sins, therefore, acquired a peculiar gravity. To fall away from an outward form would be comparatively insignificant. But to fall away from a new and a spiritual life, to undo a new nature, to defile the temple of the Holy Ghost, would be an unspeakably awful thing.[2] The loftier the privileges which baptism conferred, the graver the responsibility of its defilement. The sins of the regenerate were seen in a severer light than those of the unbaptized. The tremendous sentence in the Epistle to the Hebrews—touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, "it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance"[3]—was interpreted as a warning that baptism was more wisely deferred until character was settled and matured. This excessive fear of baptism, the austere theology of early puritanical ideals tended strongly to increase. They feared that, if the discipline of the Church yielded a ready forgiveness to post-baptismal sin, the Christian standard would become relaxed. But yet, if the Church made forgiveness difficult, almost a matter of despair, then baptism acquired

[1] Cf. *De duabus Anim.*, i.; *C. Academ.*, ii, 2–5; *De Utilitate Cred.*, i. 2.

[2] Cf. J. B. Mozley's *Essays*, i, 162.

[3] Heb., vi. 4.

new terrors, and was not unnaturally postponed, indeed till life itself was almost past. The severe Montanist School, the unbending rigour of such a teacher as Tertullian, had doubtless greatly affected African religious thought. The intense desire to raise the standard of the Church's moral witness was noble; and yet the practical effect had been that men, overwhelmed by the ecclesiastical penalties inflicted on post-baptismal sin, avoided the Sacrament of their regeneration. Thus Augustine was permitted by Monnica to grow up unbaptized.

Augustine's parents were both devoted to their son. But their hopes for his future were very different. The father's ambition was to provide the boy with a first-rate secular education. The mother's earnest desire was to see him grow to a religious and Christian manhood. As their interests were contrasted, they pulled in opposite directions. The father was keenly conscious of his son's ability, determined to secure for him the best intellectual advantages, and prepared to make every sacrifice within his power. But the father's aims and interests filled the mother with anxieties and fears. It was clearly a household in which the father ruled, and the mother's wish was not seldom frustrated.

But although susceptible to religious influence, the boy was indolent and wasted his time. He prayed that he might escape punishment at school, but made no effort to learn. Boy-like, he had no love for study, and refused to learn unless compelled. He could not resist the fascination of play. Augustine took a violent dislike to arithmetic. One and one are two, two and two are four, was an *odiosa cantio*, a hateful singsong.

From the elementary school at Tagaste Augustine was sent for higher education to Madaura, the educational resources of the latter being much superior to those of his native place. The instruction imparted at Madaura was

of a far more literary character, corresponding somewhat to the modern idea of a higher school.

But the dominant influence of Madaura was paganism. Madaura was notorious for the riotousness of its pagan festivities. Its most celebrated literary character was Apuleius, whose statue adorned the town. Five and twenty years later than these school days, in fact just before he became a priest, Augustine received a letter from an old grammarian, Maximus, pagan teacher at Madaura, whom he had evidently known some considerable time. The old teacher accused Augustine of being an apostate from paganism, " qui a mea secta deviasti." It is as certain as can well be that pagan religions never attracted Augustine. But it is quite possible that the school-boy's religion while at Madaura was neither one thing nor the other, and therefore that the boy was a pagan might be on the teacher's part a perfectly intelligible mistake. The old Numidian town was a thoroughly paganized place. It is quite probable that, through his father's influence, Augustine lived in a pagan family. It was here at Madaura that his imagination was awakened and fascinated by the poetry of Virgil, and he cried over the story of Dido's death. He grew familiar with the pagan mythology, but apparently with little else.

In later life he expressed the poorest opinion of the tone and culture of Madaura, possibly all the more emphatic because in the impressionable years of boyhood it had distinctly affected him. It is clear that the paganism of the old grammarian at Madaura, if we may take him as an example of cultured religious opinion in the place, was of a literary eclectic and philosophic sort. His letter to Augustine makes it obvious that he was indifferent to the varieties of pagan faiths. They were all of them local variations of belief in the common Father of gods and men. The one religion, however, which he excepted from

this indulgent tolerance was Christianity, obviously because of its exclusiveness.

Little did it dawn on the boy Augustine, as he mixed in the paganized atmosphere of the place, and grew familiar with its ideals, and was surrounded by the statues of its divinities, that he would return there at a later day, and would make appeal to the citizens on behalf of his mother's faith; would even write to the city in fervent words, "O men of Madaura, my brethren, nay, my fathers, I beseech you to awaken at last." He would "say something concerning Christ to the worshippers of idols." [1] But he passed through many vacillations and experienced many a struggle before that day arrived.

Augustine's education was endangered in his sixteenth year. Lack of means compelled his parents to have him back at Tagaste, while the family resources were being carefully economized in order to send him to complete his education at Carthage. His father, Patricius, was straining every effort to secure for him the best training that Africa could give. He was, Augustine gratefully acknowledges, more generous to his son than many far wealthier men were to their children, although it can hardly be denied that his father was more ambitious for his literary success than concerned about his morals. This idleness in the period of adolescence was a grave misfortune. His father had lately become a catechumen, but was hardly qualified to guide his son in self-control, and seems to have made no effort in that direction. But his mother entreated him to be pure. To these motherly warnings he did not pay much attention. Both parents seem to have discouraged him from the prospect of lawful marriage, being persuaded that such relations would hinder his worldly career.

When Augustine was in his sixteenth year his father, Patricius, died, and his prospects of higher education were

[1] Cf. *Conf.*, cxxxii.

endangered by lack of means. His mother allowed him what support she could manage, but not enough to meet his expenses as a student. In this extremely critical time, Romanian, a most distinguished and wealthy citizen of Tagaste, came to his help. Romanian had inherited estates at Tagaste, and lived like a Roman noble in a magnificent mansion with splendid surroundings. He entered enthusiastically into the amusements of the city and gave public entertainments on a scale and of a character never witnessed by the inhabitants before his time. He was boundlessly generous and extraordinarily popular: civic honours appear to have been created expressly to be conferred upon him. As happened with Victorinus at Rome, his statue was erected during his lifetime in the place of public assembly.[1] At the same time, he was a highly cultured man, keenly interested in the great problems of human thought, and deeply concerned in Augustine's advancement, with whom in some way his family was connected, and of whose remarkable promise he was well aware. Romanian, therefore, took upon himself a sort of parental responsibility for the education of his brilliant fellow-citizen, and defrayed the cost of Augustine's career at Carthage. The indebtedness of the Church to Romanian is accordingly very great.

Augustine went to reside at Carthage about the year 370. For wealth and population it was at that time the second city in the world: Rome being the first and Alexandria the third.[2] The general condition of Carthage was painted in lurid colours by Salvian, priest of Marseilles, who wrote about 450. Augustine's own allusions suggest that the state of the city in his time did not greatly differ from what it was at the later period.[3] Salvian

[1] *C. Academ.*, i. 2.
[2] See Bosworth Smith, *Carthage and the Carthaginians.*
[3] *De Gubernat. Dei*, vii, xv–xvii.

places Africa very low in the moral scale, and accumulates epithets of discredit in his estimate of its people. Their disorderly life was notorious, except where they were converted to religion and faith, which was exceedingly infrequent. For an African to be self-controlled was an almost unheard-of thing. When he became virtuous he had deserted his nationality. And as for Carthage, it is the supreme illustration of iniquity. It swarmed with people, but still more with degradations. It abounded in wealth, but super-abounded in vices. For rapacity, impurity, drunkenness and brutality its inhabitants were unsurpassed. It was a veritable city of the insane, and the miseries intermingled with it baffled description. The morals of its streets were unspeakable. In short, it bore the characteristics of a centre of civilization.

At the same time, Carthage was the great University city, the centre for Africa of intellectual activity. The Platonist philosopher Apuleius, himself an African, glows with patriotic pride when he writes of the great city's intellectual pre-eminence. Carthage, exclaimed Apuleius, "is the venerable instructor of our whole province. Carthage is the heavenly muse of Africa—the inspirer of the Roman people!" [1]

Certainly the heavenly muse of Africa was from a literary and intellectual point of view a great benefactor to its most gifted son.

Augustine's love of literature was rapidly developed at Carthage. He acquired a wide familiarity with the whole range of Latin literature. Orators and poets, stored in his retentive memory, became a lifelong possession. Aspiring to be a teacher of rhetoric, he studied deeply in the speeches of Cicero. He was ready with apt quotations from the Odes and the Satires of Horace. He knew his Terence. He particularly appreciated Sallust for his

[1] Apuleius Florides, iv. 21.

careful choice of appropriate expressions: lectissimus pensator verborum.[1] But above all masters of Latin literature his favourite was Virgil, "this most famous and approved of all poets," as he calls him;[2] strongly commending the practice of planting his verses in the minds of the young. He himself as a lad shed tears over Dido's death, and Virgil's lines are quoted all through his life in his letters and in his theological treatises.[3]

But while Augustine loved the Latin poets, he hated Greek.[4] He read a certain amount of Homer, but it was bitterness to him as a lad. The difficulties of the language proved too much for his indolence. How far Augustine ever overcame the consequences of this neglect has been a subject of much learned discussion. In later life he confesses that he was not so familiar with Greek as to be competent to appreciate Greek writings on the Holy Trinity. He was evidently conscious of loss, for what he had read in a few translated books makes him sure of their superiority.[5] Many writers have inferred from this passage that Augustine's acquaintance with Greek was extremely superficial. The historian Langen, for example, says that Augustine was the first independent thinker of the West. He found scanty support in the literature of the Latin Church. The literary treasures of the East were inaccessible to him owing to his defective knowledge of Greek.[6] One of the ablest of recent students of Augustine thinks, on the contrary, that his depreciatory estimate of his own knowledge of Greek was due to excess of modesty.[7]

We certainly find frequent references to Greek words in Augustine's writings. He compares the Latin version of Scripture with the Greek. He appeals in his latest

[1] *De beata Vita*, 31.
[2] *De. Civ. Dei*, 1. 3.
[3] Cf. Combès, *St. Augustine et la culture Classique*, p. 19.
[4] *Conf.*, i, 23.
[5] *De Trin.*, iii. 1.
[6] Langen, *Johannes von Damascus* (1879).
[7] Reuter, *Augustinische Studien*, p. 170.

controversial work to the writings of the Greek Fathers, to Gregory Nazianzen, and to Basil, and St. John Chrysostom, and others to the number of fourteen.[1] It is true that he appears to have read them for the most part in Latin translations, but at the same time he quotes a passage from Chrysostom in the Greek, and goes so far as to reprove his opponent Julian for trading on the ignorance of those who were unacquainted with Greek.[2] He uses technical Greek terms when giving instruction on the principles of biblical interpretation, and talks of the historical, ætiological, analogical, and allegorical methods and meanings, and justifies his use of such expressions on the ground that he has received them.[3]

Probably the severest criticism on Augustine's knowledge of Greek was made by Richard Simon in the seventeenth century. Simon declared that Bishop Julian knew Greek far better than Augustine did.[4]

On the whole it is probably true to say that his reluctance to undergo the labour of mastering another language left him all his life with a comparatively scanty knowledge of Greek, and therefore largely, although not entirely, dependent upon translations into Latin for his insight into the theology of the profoundest theologians of the Eastern Church.

But there was another language with which Augustine was naturally more or less familiar, and that was Punic. This was the language of the people, whereas Latin was the language of the Roman colonists. Augustine must have heard Punic frequently spoken in his boyhood, especially during his education at Madaura. The Punic names sounded uncouth in Roman ears, and at times provoked ridicule in the more cultured Latin pagan circles. Punic was a Semitic speech akin to Hebrew. It originated

[1] *C. Julianum*, i. 15.
[2] *Ibid.*, v. 7.
[3] *De Util. Credendi*, v.
[4] R. Simon, *Histoire Critique*, p. 285.

in Phœnicia. Augustine mentions Punic words in his sermons, and found them helpful in explaining many a Hebrew word. And his early knowledge of the language made him of greater service as a preacher. For Punic was the language of the people in the diocese of Hippo, and the Bishop, Valerius, did not understand it.

Augustine's reading was from a literary and rhetorical point of view. But at the same time he gained an introduction to philosophy. In the course of his studies in Cicero he came across the Dialogue which has since been lost, entitled Hortensius.[1] This Dialogue contained an eloquent advocacy of philosophy. It deeply stirred Augustine's interest and altered his outlook. It inspired him with an impassioned desire for philosophical pursuits. How deep and permanent the impression was may be gathered not only from the high terms in which he speaks of this Dialogue, read at the age of nineteen, in his Confessions, written at the age of forty-five, but also from the quotations from it in his writings which belong to the later period of his life. Both in his Treatise on the City of God, and in that on the Trinity, and in his reply to Julian, the advocate of Pelagian theories, the Hortensius holds an honoured place.

In his book on the Holy Trinity Augustine quotes from the Hortensius a passage in which Cicero speaks of argumentative people who were no true philosophers, and who maintained that happiness consisted in living as we please. On this opinion Cicero observes: "But this indeed is false. For to will what is not fitting is itself most miserable. Nor is it so miserable not to obtain what one wills as to will to obtain what one ought not." [2]

Another passage in this lost Dialogue which greatly impressed Augustine is where Cicero contrasts acquire-

[1] *Conf.*, vii. 17. [2] *De Trin.*, xiii. 8.

ments in this present life with qualities which will be of highest value in the life beyond. "If we were allowed, when we migrated from this life, to live for ever in the Islands of the blessed, as legends tell, what need would there be for eloquence when there would be no cases to try; or indeed for the very virtues themselves? For we should not need fortitude when nothing of either toil or danger was proposed to us; nor justice, when there was nothing belonging to another person to be coveted; nor should we stand in need of temperance, where there will be no passions to be restrained; nor prudence where no choice is offered between the evil and the good. Blessedness there would consist exclusively in the knowledge of nature and in that wisdom in which alone the life of the gods is worthy of being praised. And hence we may perceive that everything else is a matter of necessity, but this alone of choice." [1]

Augustine understood these reflections of the Hortensius to mean that philosophy is supreme above all things; that even the four cardinal virtues of fortitude, justice, temperance and prudence are all relative to the life on earth and required by its imperfections. Not one of them will be wanted in a future state. The condition hereafter will be the contemplation of nature, knowledge which is the highest of all possible possessions. In knowledge, therefore, the really ideal life consists.

One further passage remained in Augustine's memory. It occurs, he says, towards the close of the Hortensius. It commended the contemplation of wisdom. The passage ran:

> "While, then, we consider these things night and day, and sharpen our understanding, which is the eye of the mind, taking care that it be not even

[1] *De Trin.*, xiv. 12.

dulled, that is, while we live in philosophy; we have great hope that, if this sentiment and wisdom of ours is mortal and perishable, we shall still, when we have discharged our human offices, have a pleasant setting, and a not painful extinction, and as it were a rest from life; or if, as ancient philosophers thought—and those too the greatest and far the most celebrated—we have souls eternal and divine, then we must needs think, that the more these shall have always kept in their own proper course, that is, in reason and in research, and the less they shall have mixed and entangled themselves in the vices and errors of men, the more easy ascent and return they will have to heaven."

The final reflection, therefore, of the treatise was:

"Wherefore to finish my discourse, if we wish either for a tranquil extinction, after living in the pursuit of these subjects, or to migrate without delay from this present home to one which is better, we must bestow all our labour and care upon these pursuits." [1]

This strong commendation of philosophy awoke Augustine to an ardent longing after intellectual pursuits. The search for truth became his ruling aim. Cicero's enthusiasm communicated itself to his reader. The Hortensius was a sort of revelation opening out another world of study to the young man's mind. He became conscious of his latent ability for speculative thought. From that time the merely literary interest, the study of rhetoric, became subordinated to the search for truth. While he followed rhetoric of course as his profession, he had acquired an imperishable interest in something deeper than the forms of outward expression. To become a teacher of eloquence

[1] *De Trin.*, xiv. 26.

was the function to which parental ambition designed him, but the Roman popularization of Greek thought had enabled him to realize in which direction his own peculiar genius lay.

Augustine, in an inquiring mood, made some attempt to read the religious books of Christianity. But, as he admitted years afterwards, he was not at all in a fitting state of mind to value them. He thought the style of Scripture immeasurably inferior from a literary point of view to the Latin classics. The future professor of rhetoric was unable to appreciate the former. Presumably he read the Bible in the old Latin version. The substance does not appear to have made a favourable impression upon him.

Shortly afterwards he was still further alienated from the contents of Scripture through the hostile criticism made by Manichæans on the morals of the Old Testament. These criticisms he felt at the time to be extremely forcible, and in many respects unanswerable.

Carthaginian student life was low enough from a moral point of view. There was apparently no discipline in the lecture room. An unruly mob of students interrupted the professors' attempts to teach. There was a gang of disorderly young men, known by the name of the Wreckers, who, by violence and insolence, made themselves notorious in the streets. While Augustine kept aloof from ruder actions which he secretly loathed, he still associated with a type of student which could do him no moral good, assumed an affectation of recklessness in their companionship, and described himself as considerably worse than he really was. Such is his account of himself written years after in the severity of self-judgment from a higher point of view. But his conduct received, many years later, a more indulgent estimate in the letter of a fellow-student whose unsolicited testimonial declared that Augustine had

led a quiet, studious career at Carthage, and made excellent use of his intellectual opportunities.

Augustine's student life at Carthage was full of hopeless contradictions. He attended the services at church, but more from sexual attractions than from interest in devotion. He adopted pagan ideas about women, sought satisfaction in unhallowed love, and took to himself a Carthaginian woman as his unmarried wife. He practically disowned his allegiance to the moral ideals of the Church before he abandoned the Church's faith. He certainly sank in his own esteem. In the strong pressure of surrounding paganism, and the whole atmosphere of a pagan university, his temptations were great. The wonder is not so much that he fell. The wonder lies in his amazing recovery.

He became a father at the age of eighteen. The child was an unwelcome birth. But if he gave the boy the name of Adeodatus it was not in the cynical sense said to be at times implied in the French use of the name Desiré. For he says that the child, once born, compelled him to love it.

At Carthage also he learnt a new religion, with a theology widely different from that in which he had been brought up. The critical and spiritual effects of that new religion were momentous and form one of the great stages in the process of his development.

CHAPTER II

THE PERIOD OF DUALISM

THERE is nothing to show that the Church in Carthage exerted any influence over Augustine during his student days. The Bishops of Carthage were distinguished men. The life of the Church in that city was vigorous. It contained a nunber of sanctuaries. It was the centre of ecclesiastical interests, of sectarian disputes. It had resounded with rivalries between Catholic and Donatist for a hundred years. It was the seat of an Archbishopric and the place where Councils met. The writings of St. Cyprian must have been easily accessible there. But nothing of all this seems to have touched the student from Tagaste. He attended the services of the Church, but appears to have learnt nothing of Christian doctrine. If the teaching was anything like it had been in Cyprian's days, Augustine remained impervious. His interests were elsewhere. He simply did not take it in.

Cicero's Hortensius had conferred upon him the enormous blessing of awakening his mind to intellectual interests. But it had implanted no particular system of ideas. It was rather an encouragement to eclecticism. The ideal suggested was not to go after this particular school or that, but to seek and pursue, and clasp and never let go wisdom. But where this wisdom was to be found was another matter. To that question the Hortensius gave no answer. Badly grounded as Augustine was in Christian doctrine, he had no adequate religious principles to support him. His poorly furnished mind was accessible

to any new attraction. He had no standard of truth whereby various systems could be tried. And he was destined to pass through many phases, and make experience of many theories, before the final settlement could be reached.

The first great system of non-Christian thought to which Augustine was attracted was the religion of Manes. Manes was a Persian whose brief career lay between the years 240 and 277. Augustine reports that both opponents and adherents played upon his name; the former asserting it to be akin to madness, the latter akin to Manna which fell in the desert.[1]

The Manichæan religion was one of the forms of Oriental Dualism. Modern research has proved that Manichæism extended widely in the Roman Empire.[2] It appears to have differed considerably in various localities. But the North African variety was at any rate the form in which Augustine accepted it. And what that form actually was is perfectly clear in the documents which still survive and with which Augustine was very familiar. It is also richly and profusely illustrated by the criticisms upon it in Augustine's own writings. The main principles of this religion are recorded partly in a letter called the Foundation, which was ascribed to Manes himself; partly also in the writings of Faustus, an exponent contemporary with Augustine, and recognized to be the chief theologian of the Manichæan community. It is probable that these expositions would not have survived had not Augustine embodied large portions of them in his later criticisms on this religion. We have, then, through Augustine's labours the great advantage of possessing

[1] *De Haer.*, xlvi.

[2] Cf. Cumont, "La propagation du Manichæisme dans l'Empire Romain," *Revue d'histoire et lit. relig.* (1910), i. 34; F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity* (1915); Burkitt, *The Religion of the Manichees*; Jens Norregaard, *Augustins Bekehrung* (1923), p. 29 ff.

explanations of African Manichæism at first hand, and not merely through the medium of a hostile mind.

In the letter called the Foundation, Manes affirms the eternal existence of two opposing substances: the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness. Over the Kingdom of Light presided God the Father; over the Kingdom of Darkness presided a dreadful prince. Manes does not ascribe to this evil being the name of Deity. But he appears to make this Prince of the Kingdom of Darkness as eternal as the Chief who presides over the Kingdom of Light. The Kingdom of Darkness is contrary in its nature to the Kingdom of Light: the former being material and the latter spiritual. This theory obviously identifies evil with material substance and good with spirit. Antagonism between these opposite principles was, of course, inevitable. And on that antagonism between good and evil, between the spiritual element of existence and the material, Manes expatiates at considerable length.

A singular feature of Manes' writing is his anxiety to claim for his teaching that it was identical with Christian principles, and for himself that he had direct communion with and authority from Jesus Christ. Its opening sentence ran: "Manichæus, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the appointment of God the Father." This singular claim to be the original unadulterated form of the Christian religion is a persistent characteristic of the Manichæism with which Augustine was familiar.

The ideas propounded by Manes in this Foundation Epistle were afterwards enlarged and elaborated in Augustine's time by Faustus, the chief exponent of this religion.

Faustus represents himself as profoundly dissatisfied with the pantheistic explanation of the universe. The doctrine that all things good and evil, mean and glorious, material and spiritual, are the products of one and the

same ultimate principle was, in his opinion, revolting. He calls it the pagan doctrine. And with that doctrine it was impossible to account for the problems of existence.

From that doctrine of pantheistic unity he therefore turned away. The true solution of the facts lay, he held, in Dualism. There were behind the phenomena of the visible world two ultimate principles. Not one only, but two. One of these was the promoter and originator of all good, and the other of all evil. The former was God, the latter was called Hylé. Both principles were eternal, and, of course, in perpetual opposition.

The inference as to divine limitations which follows naturally from Dualistic principles was frankly accepted by Faustus.[1] He had no hesitation in saying that God was finite.

As for the ultimate destiny of men, the Manichæan theory was that the elect would attain to deliverance from the body; while the inferior, unable to aspire to such deliverance, would, by a process of transmigration, degrade into brute cattle, and into any form of existence which was permanently chained to earth.

Up to this point Faustus' exposition of the religion of Manes contains just the ordinary fundamental doctrine of any Dualistic creed. To this doctrine was added an elaborate mythology, through which its main principles acquired popular expression. But the chief peculiarity of this type of Dualism lay in its relation to Christianity. For the religion of Manes not only included a large assimilation of Christian names, and words, and phrases: Faustus strongly insisted on the claim that Manichæism was the original and genuine form of Christianity. It declared the Catholic faith to be a debased expression of Christ's religion. The Manichæan community was asserted to be the true Church and the Bride of Christ.

[1] *C. Faust.*, xxv.

In a very remarkable passage, Faustus expounds his conception of God in Trinitarian phrases. "We worship," he said, "one deity, under the threefold title [1] of the Almighty God the Father, and His Son Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. While these are one and the same, we believe also that the Father properly dwells in the highest or principal light, which Paul calls light inaccessible, and the Son is His second or visible light. And as the Son is Himself twofold, according to the Apostle, who speaks of Christ as the power of God and the wisdom of God, we believe that His power dwells in the sun, and His wisdom in the moon. We also believe that the Holy Spirit, the third majesty, has His seat and His home in the whole circle of the atmosphere." [2]

The Manichæan conception of Christ was totally different from that of the Catholic faith. Faustus expressed profound veneration for Christ; spoke of "love and reverence" for Him; and contrasted Christ with Moses in remarkable terms. Moses was a man, and Christ was God; Moses was a sinner, and Christ was sinless; Moses was born by ordinary generation, and Christ was not born at all. Faustus was compelled, by his identification of evil with matter, to deny that Christ could ever have been born of a woman. He held that the Body is due to Nature, not to God. For the Son of God to take our nature would be to contaminate Himself with evil. Incarnation, therefore, was to Faustus inconceivable: a contradiction to his fundamental Dualistic belief. Christ, therefore, was not born at all. Quite frankly he wrote the words, "I disbelieve the Incarnation." His conception of Christ separated the Son of Mary from the Son of God. The Son of Mary was made Son of God at the Baptism. There was an association between the two persons. But this association was not intimate. It could mean little

[1] Sub triplici appellatione. [2] *C. Faust.*, xx. 2.

more than a friendly condescension on the part of the Son of God toward the Son of Mary. For if the Son of God came too near to the Son of Mary, He would obviously contract the leprosy of evil. Faustus was therefore compelled by his Dualistic principles to reduce the whole life of Christ to unreality.[1] Christ was not born. He could not become man. Neither did He actually die. The whole career was a mere shadowy representation. He underwent the experience of humanity only in appearance. It was a phantasm, and nothing more. As He never came in the flesh at all, He neither died nor rose again.

The religion of Manes went further still in its appropriation of Christian phrases. It adopted the general terms of the constitution of the Church. It appropriated the names and offices of the Christian ministry. It had its deacons, its presbyters, its Bishops. It also had its sacraments. Baptism and a Eucharistic meal were among its observances.

While African Manichæism displayed external resemblances to Christianity, it absolutely repudiated the Jewish religion. With the Old Testament Faustus would have nothing to do. It was the product of an inferior Deity. "In the God of the Hebrews we have no interest whatever," wrote Faustus. "We who have been converted to Christ from heathenism look upon the God of the Hebrews not merely as dead, but as never having existed."[2] The morals of the Old Testament were criticized with the greatest severity. The idea of progressive morality had not entered the Manichæan mind.

The attitude of the Manichæan toward the Christian Scriptures was highly critical. Faustus expressed considerable esteem for them, but reserved the right to reject quite freely everything which did not harmonize with his

[1] Cf. Brückner, *Faustus von Milevis*, p. 22. [2] *C. Faust.*, xv.

views. He displays much familiarity with Pauline phrases, and great ingenuity in attempts to combine Christian ideas with a Dualistic theology. But whenever he encounters a doctrine which baffles his eclectic combinations, he disputes the authority of the text, and waxes sceptical. The New Testament is said to have been deplorably corrupted. Faustus declared that he could not accept the Old Testament precisely because he accepted the New. But his acceptance of the New was qualified by remarkable restrictions and reserves. On the saying that "Christ came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets," Faustus wrote, "We must doubt whether Jesus ever said these words." As a Manichæan, Faustus had been "taught to believe that many things which pass muster in Scripture under the name of the Saviour are spurious." Elsewhere he wrote, "Since it is uncertain when these words were spoken, we are at liberty to doubt whether they were spoken at all."

Faustus was, of course, far too acute not to understand that his Dualistic theology was the doctrine neither of Christ nor of the Apostles. He acknowledged it in so many words. But he endeavoured to neutralize the acknowledgment by maintaining that the essence of Christianity was conduct, and not doctrine. He thought that Christ had no interest in a man's dogmatic beliefs. He therefore considered himself to be a Christian because, while rejecting Christian doctrine, he assented to Christian morals.

The exponent of this blending of religions went on to claim that this Manichæan version was the genuine form of Christianity from which the Catholic faith was but a relapse into belief in an ultimate unity which, like the pagan doctrine, made God responsible for evil as well as for good. Faustus accordingly claimed to be a Christian. Christianity consists, in his opinion, rather in morals than

in dogma. Quite in keeping with these eclectic methods is the sentence of the Founder already quoted, "Manes, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the appointment of God the Father." And an adherent of this religion describes himself as "Felix, a Christian, venerator of the law of Manes." [1]

The religion of Manes may therefore be described as Oriental Dualism expressed as far as possible in terms of the Christian faith.

But of course, however remarkable and numerous the external similarities were between Manichæism and Christianity, it is obvious that the differences were profound and fundamental. No really instructed member of the Catholic Church could have been misled by the similarities to overlook the difference.

It may at first sight cause us some surprise that Augustine should have been attracted by this curious admixture of ideas. But the fact is that there were several influences which drew him.

To begin with, there was his ignorance of Catholic truth. He was the son of a mixed marriage. Father and mother were divided in their hopes about him. The father cared for little beyond a secular ambition, and was content if his son obtained the best pagan education. The mother had very different ideals indeed, but was not able to get her own way. And while the mother imprinted indelibly on her son's memory the name of Christ, she was not a highly educated woman. Nor is there anything to show that the Christian teaching given in the Church at Tagaste was at all equal to the needs and inquiries of this brilliant and restless mind. It seems that Augustine went to Carthage as badly instructed in Christian doctrine as many a lad from an ordinary English Public School. Everything depended on the home, and the home was not able to provide. He was not com-

[1] *C. Felic.*, i, 19, 20.

petent to face the implications of the new ideas. He did not understand the foundations of Christian truth. He was at the mercy of any attractive novelty. He had not realized that Christianity did not make God the originator of evil. He felt keenly the difficulty of its existence. It was natural for him to suppose that Dualism solved the problem, and that Christianity did not. Moreover, his conception of God was strangely materialistic. To account for evil as an eternal substance appeared for the time a satisfactory solution. In fact this religion, in spite of its mythology, was fundamentally a serious attempt to solve the problem of evil. And as such it commended itself strongly to Augustine's favour.

Then also there were the numerous external resemblances between the religion of Manes and the religion of Augustine's childhood. The perpetual reiteration of the Name of the Father, and of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, the reverence extended to Christ by the Manichæans, their readiness to call Him Son of the Living God, their ascription to Him in some sense or other even of the name of Deity, their constant and subtle misuse of the language of St. Paul—all these things contributed towards alluring the consent of inadequately instructed Christians. It was the absence of the name of Christ from the Latin books on philosophy which made Augustine feel their insufficiency. There was a vigorous Manichæan propaganda in Carthage, while Catholicism was divided and compromised by the Donatist disputes. The constant use of Scriptural phraseology to convey unscriptural ideas commended the Manichæan theory to the unlearned and unwary.

But undoubtedly the chief attraction of this religion to Augustine was its professed appeal to reason without any demand for faith. The exaltation of reason and the disparagement of faith were thoroughly congenial to his argumentative disposition and to the academic atmosphere

in which he was then living. The teacher's promise to require adherence to nothing which he could not demonstrate appealed powerfully to the young man's intelligence. The Manichæan instructors were perpetually reiterating the term truth. And, as he says, he thought it more reasonable to defer to men who offered you demonstration than to men who demanded faith. (Docentibus potius quam jubentibus esse credendum.)[1]

Augustine, therefore, after a superficial and hasty investigation, surrendered himself to the attractions of Manichæism, in a manner which his own maturer judgment severely condemned. There were many things, he wrote, on later reflection, which ought to have prevented this rapid and ready abandonment of the religion of his youth.[2]

He was by no means entirely blind to the difficulties which his new religion presented. Nor could he reconcile himself to its mythology. He found himself associated with worshippers of the sun, a practice to which he could not agree. But he was willing to give the new religion the benefit of the doubt. He was ready to suppose that this unwelcome devotion was only a symbol of some hidden truth which would be made clearer to him at a later time.[3] He failed to realize his lack of impartial judgment in saying this. For he was extending to his new religion an act of faith instead of a demand for demonstration, and by this act of faith in Manichæan mysteries was stultifying his refusal of exercising faith towards Christianity and towards Christ.

There were other ceremonial observances which might have enabled him to realize the character of Manichæan devotion. While the festival of Manes was observed with great distinction, there was a disconcerting indifference to the value of Easter Day. The contrast between this neglect

[1] *De beat. Vita*, iv. [2] *De duabus Anim.*, i. [3] *De beat. Vita*, iv.

of the Queen of Christian festivals and the great rejoicing with which, as a lad, he had seen it celebrated in the Church, affected him painfully.[1] But he failed to appreciate, at the time, the profound significance of this neglect. On Manichæan principles it could not be otherwise. For a phantasmal Christ could not die, and therefore could not rise out of a death which He was incapable of experiencing. Augustine was not as critical as might have been expected towards the Manichæan faith.

So he threw himself into the arms of this other religion, but not quite whole-heartedly. He became a hearer, although he never advanced so far as to become one of the elect.[2] Still, he adhered to it for no less a period than nine years. A hearer was a member of the lower grade of adherents. He was permitted certain concessions to human infirmity, to eat flesh, to cultivate land, and to marry if he pleased. Whereas to the elect none of these concessions was permitted.[3]

At the same time, he did his best to convince his friends that Dualism was the true religion. In this attempt he was remarkably successful. Romanian, Alypius, Honoratus, Marcian, and another intimate friend whose name is not recorded, all followed Augustine into the Manichæan faith. On the other side, the acute and thoughtful Nebridius resisted. Sharply critical, he propounded difficulties which the adherents of this religion found disconcerting.

As soon as his student course at Carthage was complete Augustine returned to his native town. The problem which now beset him was how to get his living. He had been dependent on the generosity of Romanian. But naturally that could not last indefinitely. His mother could not do much for him. The home resources were very limited, and there were his brother and his sister to

[1] *C. Ep. Fund.*, 8. [2] *C. Fortunat.*, iii. [3] *Ep.*, ccxxxvi. 2.

be considered. But he returned a convinced Manichæan, to Monnica's intense distress. The change which had come over her son revolted her. He who years before had paid no regard to his mother's entreaties was not in the least degree likely to be influenced by her remonstrances now. It was a scandal in his family. She felt his alienation from the Christian faith so acutely that she positively refused for the time to live with him. Romanian, however, promptly came to the rescue, took the wanderer into his own mansion, and made him tutor to his son Licentius. So Augustine set up as a teacher of grammar, took pupils, among whom was Alypius, afterwards the companion of his conversion, and a future Bishop of the Church.

Monnica's distress over Augustine's secession was profound. She shed more tears about it than many mothers have shed when their sons have died. But she never lost hope in his recovery. She was greatly comforted by a dream, assuring her that where she was her son should one day be. When she told Augustine her dream he tried to turn it off with the remark that no doubt the meaning was that she would one day think as he did. But she quickly answered that the vision did not say, Where he is you shall be, but, Where you are he shall be. Her confidence was unassailable. And her prayer for his conversion was perpetual. She attempted, with more zeal than prudence, to induce a Bishop to argue with her son. The Bishop declined, advising her to pray for him, and to leave him to discover by his own studies the untenable nature of that religion. The Bishop added that he himself had been an adherent of Manichæism in his youth, was thoroughly familiar with their opinions, and, without extraneous discussion, realized their incredibility. And when Monnica persisted in begging him with tears to intervene, he dismissed her with the memorable words, "It is not possible that the child of those tears should perish";

words which the poor mother cherished as a voice from heaven.

But Monnica could not get on without her son. So he left Romanian's mansion and went home, retaining his pupils. He was in a very difficult, distracted state, unmanageable, self-absorbed, and without self-control. Affection between mother and son was chiefly on one side. Not till a later time did Augustine realize the wonder of the love which was lavished upon him.

Augustine's next experience was the discipline of bereavement. He had an intimate friend whose name is not recorded, a companion since boyhood. They had been school-fellows, and grew up together. Augustine had led him, as he did so many of his friends, into Manichæan ideas. And now this friend lay dangerously ill. In this condition, in a state of unconsciousness, his relatives had him baptized. On his recovering consciousness Augustine mockingly informed him how the sacrament had been conferred, quite expecting that the sick man would share in his contempt for it. To his astonishment, however, the sick man shrank from him as from an enemy, and warned him that unless such language ceased their friendship was at an end. Augustine, greatly disconcerted, deferred argument until his friend recovered, relying on his ascendency to dispel what he now regarded as illusions. But instead of recovery came relapse, and in Augustine's absence his friend unexpectedly died.

This loss made a deep and lasting impression on Augustine. His father's death, which happened some months before, seems to have touched him far less. He has next to nothing to record about that in his autobiographical pages. But when he comes to be deprived of his companion of the same age, all the affection and emotion of his nature were awakened. He could not bear the old familiar places where everything recalled some

memory of his dead friend. He left Tagaste and went to live at Carthage, where he took pupils, and got his living as a teacher of rhetoric.

Here he seems to have made his first appearance as an author, in a book concerning the appropriate and the beautiful, evidently a treatise on literary style, which he dedicated to Hierius, a Roman rhetorician, whom he had never seen, but greatly admired. This work has unfortunately perished. What he chiefly admired in Hierius was intellectual ability. For the man was by birth a Syrian, an eloquent speaker in Greek, and a brilliant orator in Latin also. This remarkable linguistic power evidently captured Augustine's imagination, possibly for the very reason that he himself had mastered no other language than his own.

Augustine was barely twenty years of age when he became acquainted with the Categories of Aristotle. He studied these independently of any teacher, and understood them.

But his critical, inquiring disposition found no rest. He wandered about toward every fresh theory which came in his way. He felt attracted to astrology; thought much on the stars and their influence on individual destiny. This addiction to astrology was serious because of its moral effect. It meant fatalism. The explanation of evil was found in material forces. It was the influence of Saturn or of Mars which determined a man's conduct and character. Personal responsibility did not exist.

At this crisis, Vindician, an eminent African physician, took a particular interest in his highly gifted fellow-countryman. Vindician had risen to the rank of proconsul, and in that capacity conferred on Augustine a declamation prize at Carthage. Vindician had remarkable influence over his patients, and his utterances were discussed as oracles, and quoted by Augustine some thirty-

five years afterwards.[1] He did his utmost to disabuse Augustine of a theory which, in his opinion, had no scientific foundation. But neither his ability, nor experience, nor reasonings, could prevail with the younger man. Neither could Augustine's intimate friend, Nebridius, prevail at this period to shake his belief in divination, or induce him to desist from reading books about astrology.

But Oriental Dualism was not to be Augustine's resting-place. In this eager and restless mind there arose misgivings about the Manichæan theories which he had accepted. His adherence was somewhat shaken at a public discussion held in Carthage by a Christian advocate named Helpidius. Helpidius produced certain Scripture arguments which the Manichees were not able to refute, except by denying that the passages quoted were genuine. They asserted that the Christian Scriptures had been corrupted by the Jews. But as they were unable to produce any documentary evidence to substantiate their assertion, the more intelligent part of the audience concluded that the Manichæans were reduced to make this reply through inability to maintain their principles. His experience at this meeting set Augustine thinking.

Meanwhile, his own reflections were leading him to doubt whether evil was a substance. This doctrine was fundamental to the Manichæan theology, but, after all, was it true? Did any such thing as an evil substance exist? A popular advocate of the sect answered this challenge by suggesting that the inquirer should hold a scorpion in his hand, and see whether that did not convince him of the existence of an evil substance. This attempt at refutation only increased the questioner's doubtfulness. If the poison itself were intrinsically evil, remarked Augustine, it would have already destroyed the scorpion.[2]

The fact is that Augustine was growing unsettled. And

[1] *Ep.*, cxxxviii. 3. [2] *De Moribus Manich.*, ii.

time only increased his difficulties. He made no attempt to conceal his doubts from other adherents of that religion. They reassured him with the promise that their celebrated teacher, Faustus, would solve Augustine's difficulties as soon as he came to Carthage. For the arrival of this expert in Manichæan theology Augustine accordingly waited.

At last, after a very considerable delay, Faustus arrived. The Manichæan sect had awarded him the title of Bishop. This is a further example of the use of Christian terminology which is conspicuous in this Dualistic religion. They wanted to claim affinity with Christian ideas. But, of course, while the terminology was partially retained, the meaning entirely differed.

The character of Faustus, who, like Augustine, was an African by birth, is unmistakable. He has revealed himself in his writings. He was a born debater, a master in logical dilemmas and smart repartees. He had all the elements which make for success in a popular discussion. He was a man of acuteness, eloquence and of unbounded self-confidence. When arguing with Christians he took the line that he was just as much a Christian as they. Although philosophically a Dualist, he professed to accept the Gospel just as much as any member of the Catholic Church. By the Gospel, however, he meant the preaching of Christ, and by the preaching of Christ exclusively the moral commands. The essence of Christianity according to Faustus consisted in ethics, and not in theology. He claimed to have followed the precepts of the Gospel. He asserted that he was poor and meek, a peacemaker, pure in heart, hungry and thirsty after righteousness. He said he was well aware that Catholics will reply that the Gospel does not consist exclusively in obedience to moral commands, but involves belief in certain doctrines, of which Incarnation is one. But, contended Faustus, even if that were true, which he disputes, neither does the Gospel

consist in faith without obedience. And he roundly accuses the Christians of the Church with failure to obey. Here then he claims equality. You reject the precepts, and I the doctrine. If your rejection does not cancel your Christianity, neither does mine. What one lacks the other possesses. And Faustus claimed that he had chosen the harder part; the profession of a doctrine being incomparably easier than submission to a command. Moreover, urged Faustus, acceptance of doctrines is no part of the Christianity of Christ. Ask Him who shall enter into His Kingdom. It is "he that doeth the will of My Father," not he who believes in My Incarnation.

Such was the controversial style of this born debater against adherents of the Catholic Church. If he carried out his depreciation of doctrine consistently, and applied it to Dualism as well as to Christianity, it would seem that the problems of Manichæan theology, which profoundly disturbed Augustine's intelligence, would not have given Faustus the least uneasiness. For he professes himself concerned with morals to the exclusion of theological ideas.

The meeting, therefore, of Augustine and Faustus is peculiarly interesting, being the encounter of two widely contrasted types.

Augustine found in Faustus pretty much what we might expect: a ready wit, a fluent speech, but no capacity to solve the problems set before him. He was a master of captivating phrases and apt expressions. A deep thinker he was not. He said the same things as other members of the sect: only he said them with far greater grace and eloquence. But Augustine afterwards reflected, What satisfaction can a man who thirsts for truth derive from the richness of the vessels which offer him what cannot satisfy his thirst? Faustus was more attractive than other people, but he was not wiser than they.

Indeed, Faustus, confronted with so able a mind as

Augustine, acknowledged his ignorance with the most engaging frankness. He not only did not know, and knew that he did not know, but he also possessed the sincerity to admit it. That Faustus should be the teacher and Augustine the learner was impossible. But they were drawn to like each other. They turned from the problems of theology to literary discussions, and continued acquaintance on the basis of a common interest in Cicero and Seneca.

But the effect was inevitable. The encounter with Faustus insensibly loosened the ties which bound Augustine to the Manichæan Creed. While Augustine respected Faustus for his honesty, the result of companionship with him was increased unsettlement in faith. For Faustus was the recognized chief exponent and authority in a religion which claimed to be founded exclusively on reason. And yet, when it came to the test, reason failed. Thus Faustus, serenely unaware of the effect which he was producing on his brilliant and profoundly thoughtful companion, was contributing effectively to send Augustine's mind elsewhere.

And so the two men parted. They were not destined to meet again. But in after years, when the young inquirer had become a Christian Bishop, it became his lot to make reply to the writings of Faustus, the Manichæan.

But the hour for definite decision was not yet. Various influences combined to produce deep unsettlement. The intimate friendship abruptly terminated by death, his contempt for baptism, strangely rebuked on the very brink of the other world, deeply affected him. The failure of Faustus to reassure his mind and to bring religious peace could only increase his profound unrest. These things probably tended unconsciously to estrange him from Carthaginian life, and to prompt a desire to transfer him-

self to Rome. But the principal motive of the change was the unruly behaviour of the students at Carthage. Lecturing at Carthage must have been a painful task. Students burst into the lecture-room in a wild, unmannerly crew, which the lecturer was totally unable to control. Consecutive teaching must have been somewhat hopeless. Augustine tersely observes that the horseplay which he had repudiated as a student he was forced to endure as a professor. Students in Rome were—so he was informed—a well-disciplined and orderly class. The unmannerly scenes of Carthaginian University life would not be tolerated in Rome. Augustine resolved to try his fortune there.

Various motives, no doubt, contributed to this decision. There was a natural tendency on the part of enterprising and ambitious young men to seek their fortune in the central city of the mighty Empire. Law and civil service and offices of State all alike had their chief opportunities in Rome. Communication between Rome and Carthage was frequent. Some of Augustine's personal friends had already made the crossing. And his Manichæan acquaintances were prepared to commend him to the members of their religion resident in the Eternal City.

Augustine was very reserved about his decision to leave Africa. He kept his plans entirely to himself, not even informing his patron and benefactor, Romanian. Least of all did he desire that Monnica should know. She, however, quick-sighted and shrewd as usual, detected his restlessness, guessed his scheme, and did her utmost to dissuade him. She followed him to the sea, and would have crossed with him. But Augustine was secretly resolved that she should not go. Then came the miserable deceit. "I pretended that I had a friend whom I could not leave until he had a favourable wind to set sail. And I lied to my mother—and such a mother!—and got away . . . It

was with difficulty I persuaded her to remain that night in a place quite close to our ship, where there was an oratory in memory of the blessed Cyprian. That night I secretly left." "The wind blew, and filled our sails, and withdrew the shore from our sight, and she, wild with grief, was there on the morrow." Augustine adds the singular reflection: "The gross part of her love to me was whipped out by the just lash of sorrow." The strangeness of this is modified by the following words: "But like all mothers, though even more than others, she loved to have me with her, and knew not what joy Thou wert preparing for her by my absence."

CHAPTER III

THE PERIOD OF SCEPTICISM

ARRIVED in Rome, Augustine contracted what was apparently malarial fever, was very seriously ill, and nearly died. Before long Alypius discovered him. Alypius was reading law and held a post in the department of State finance.

After recovering from his illness, he still associated himself with the Manichæans. His illness happened in the house of a member of that sect. He still supposed that nature sinned in us, and not that we ourselves committed sin. Consequently he did not blame himself for his moral irregularities. But the problems which Faustus could not solve haunted Augustine more than ever. And while he did not separate himself from the sect, he had lost all hope of advancing truth.

Augustine now reached a second stage in his intellectual progress.

That condition of mind could not be permanent. It might take one of two directions. Either he might emerge into some other definite religion, or else he might sink into a state of universal uncertainty. And for the time it was the latter which seemed more probable. This tendency was perfectly natural. He had found the theories of Dualism intellectually unsatisfying. He had discovered the powerlessness of unaided reason to solve the problems of existence. What more natural, therefore, than to take refuge in Scepticism. The Philosophic School of the

Academy commended itself to common sense. Was it not natural to say that there was no such thing as certainty? It appeared that every intellectual proposition may be neutralized by its opposite. What attitude, then, was possible but to make no definite assertions whatsoever, to draw no conclusion either for or against, and to hold one's judgment in permanent suspense? [1]

This sceptical philosophy came before Augustine at a very critical period; when he was realizing the insecurity of Dualistic ideas, and was unable to see any prospect of ascertaining truth from the Church.

He made no attempt to conceal his doubts from his Manichæan friends. On the contrary, he became very critical and argumentative. There were many adherents of that religion in Rome. And he lived on more intimate terms with them than with the section of the population which was not addicted to Dualistic beliefs. This familiarity was not likely to draw him nearer to the Church. But he adhered to them rather by custom than by conviction. It is noteworthy also that paganism did not exert any fascination over him. He had seen enough of its practical effects in Carthage.

While the Confessions are the chief authority for our knowledge of this period, there is also a precious autobiographical fragment preserved in a letter to a friend.[2] Augustine describes very graphically the vacillation and uncertainty which afflicted him, the bitter disappointment caused by Faustus with his fluent inability. Awaited as a messenger from heaven, he proved no more capable than ordinary men to penetrate the problems of human destiny. Augustine no longer deliberated whether he should continue with the Manichæans. He deeply regretted that he had ever joined them. Eager after truth, but doubtful whether it could be found by mortal man, he drifted at times

[1] Erdmann's *History of Philosophy*, I. 193. [2] *De Util. Cred.*, 20.

towards wholesale incredulity; and then, by reaction, reflecting on the capacity of the human mind, he could not believe it permanently excluded from knowledge of the Truth.

There was much in the intellectual atmosphere of the time to encourage universal incredulity. The Scepticism of the Academic School of doubt had been popularized in Roman circles through the writings of Cicero, with whose works Augustine, in his study of rhetoric, had been made very familiar. Cicero had composed a special treatise on the Academic view. In this treatise he advocated holding judgment in suspense, on the ground that nothing whatever could with any certainty be known. Cicero had, indeed, presented both sides of the case. But he argued on the Sceptical side with incomparably greater strength and effectiveness than on the positive.

He laid down the general proposition that, among the objects of sight, some have real existence, while others have not, and that we have no means of distinguishing for certain between the real and unreality. This insecurity lands us in a position of universal doubt. The unreality of many objects of sight was illustrated by dreams, by drunkenness, and by insanity. Many objects, seen under such conditions, seem quite real at the time. If, then, false visions can appear as true, why may not also our waking conclusions be just as destitute of reality? We are capable of being terrified by illusions. And how does a man propose to demonstrate that he is sane?

Advancing from this general standpoint to criticize the evidence of the *senses*, Cicero's treatise inquires, What if the senses do not convey the truth? The advocate of their trustworthiness assures us that he is not disturbed by the fact that the appearance of an oar in the water does not correspond with reality. But why is he not disturbed by this? For what he sees does not agree with what is. And

what criterion do you possess whereby to distinguish when the senses convey truth, and when they convey falsehood? A ship at sea seems stationary, viewed from land; to those on board it seems to move. What are the actual dimensions of the sun according to the mathematicians? What do they appear to our sense of sight? What is the speed at which it moves? Yet it seems as if it were standing still. If our senses deceive us at times, everything they convey is thrown into insecurity.

The Academic philosopher proceeds next to criticize the evidence of *Reason*. He inquires what confidence can be placed in logic. The basis of all reasoning is the proposition that every statement is either false or true. But if you say that you are speaking falsehood, and say so truly, then is your statement falsehood and yet it is the truth. But if the fundamental principles of all reasoning be insecure, what confidence can you place in its conclusions?

As to the maxim that a proposition must be true which cannot possibly be false, the Academic critic replied that he was unable to discover anything of that description He could have opinions, but knowledge he could not have.

And as for mathematical conclusions, they are of no security at all, unless you grant their axioms.

The critic contended that the same uncertainty beset all theological conceptions. If God made everything, as you assert, for man's advantage, why are vipers, and so many deadly and pernicious things, scattered all over sea and land? Moreover, others maintain that the world is not the creation of Divinities. The fact is that no human intellect can penetrate the skies. We know nothing for certain. We cannot tell, says Cicero's treatise, whether the moon is inhabited, or what is the solution of the problem of the Antipodes.

And, said the critic, when we come to moral questions, there is no more security. What subject is there on which

greater discord prevails among the ablest of men? What is the highest good? Is it knowledge? Is it virtue? Is it pleasure? See how these wise men differ. Which am I to follow?

Such were the sort of doubts with which Augustine had been made familiar, and which came upon him with considerable force in the period of his reaction from the Dualism of the Manichees.

But Augustine's scepticism was never thorough-going and complete. Certain religious foundations were never altogether removed. He never lost his belief in the existence of God, nor in the immortality of the soul.[1] But while these elements of religion never entirely disappeared, the sceptical philosophy of the Academy had produced a very disturbing sense of insecurity. This unsettlement was all the more severe because he encountered the Sceptical theory just in the time of reaction from the Manichæan ideas. Having lost his belief in doctrines more or less accepted for some years, he was now assailed with uncertainty whether truth could anywhere be ascertained. He had lost his bearings; and the sceptical books to which he turned promoted the tendency to total unbelief. He felt the force of the critical intellect to pull down and to destroy. He saw no answers to the difficulties which the Sceptical School propounded.

What more could be affirmed than a universal perhaps? There was in everything a probability, but there was no certainty. There was no absolute truth either in dogma or in morals. Augustine, therefore, felt the keenest sympathy with philosophers who doubted everything. Truth was eternally beyond the reach of the capacity of man.

And yet, of course, also quite consistently, he not only doubted whether truth could be ascertained, but also doubted whether his doubts themselves were true. What

[1] *Conf.*, vi. 7, 8.

if, after all, his doubts had been mistaken? Thus he was haunted by still further misgivings, and liable to still further reactions.

The challenges of Agnosticism forced Augustine to reflect whether any secure foundation for belief in the possibility of possessing truth could be found. That foundation he finds in the consciousness of his own existence. In one of his later works he says, "I am not at all afraid of the arguments of the Academics, who say, What if you are deceived? For if I am deceived, I exist. For he who is not cannot be deceived. And if I am deceived, that is a proof that I exist. And since I exist if I am deceived, how am I deceived in believing that I exist? For it is certain that I exist if I am deceived." [1]

"Si fallor, sum." Fused into that simple sentence is a world of thought. It was for Augustine what "Cogito, ergo sum" was for Descartes.[2] It gave a solid foundation beneath all uncertainty. It formed an indestructible basis on which a whole world of reality could rest. It delivered Augustine from universal suspense and from inability to assent to anything as invincibly true.

This particular formulation of the idea comes from one of Augustine's later works. But it is one which had haunted him for many years, and can be traced back into this early period of his life. In his early discussion with Evodius, he says to his friend, Let us begin with something self-evident; I ask you first whether you yourself exist. Or are you afraid to say yes, and be deceived? Whereas if you did not exist you could not be deceived. To this question, whether he is certain of the truth of his own existence, Evodius replies simply, "Go on to something else." [3] They both agree that in the consciousness of his own existence is an indisputable truth.

[1] *De Civ. Dei*, xi. 26. [2] Cf. *Works of Thomas Reid* (1849), p. 744.
[3] *De libero Arbitrio*, ii. 7.

And again, in his Soliloquies, written in the very year of his conversion, he renews the same reflection.[1]

The same great thought is expanded in another treatise written shortly after his conversion.[2] Every person who is aware that he doubts, is aware of a truth. He is certain of that of which he is aware. He is certain of a truth. Every man, therefore, who doubts whether there is such a thing as Truth, possesses within himself a truth of which he does not doubt. He then who is capable of doubt ought not to doubt concerning the possibility of ascertaining truth.

Augustine, says Erdmann, "seeks for an immovable point of departure for all knowledge, and finds this in the self-confidence with which a thinking being asserts his own existence, which remains certain in spite of all doubts, indeed, becomes certain through them." [3]

But when he looked toward the other side of the great alternative, the religion of the Church, he was immediately repelled. What repelled him, however, was not the Catholic faith, as he afterwards came to discover, but his own mistaken ideas about its teaching. For he was unconsciously labouring under a total misconception of the Catholic doctrine concerning God's nature. He was still possessed by Manichæan presuppositions concerning Deity. He was unable to conceive of God except as substance and corporeal. He supposed that the Catholic faith regarded Deity in this way. But his Manichæan principles had taught him that Deity could not become incarnate without contamination by contact with a substance which was evil. Incarnation, therefore, was wholly incredible. He therefore recoiled from incredibilities which he ascribed to the Catholic religion, but which were, in reality, the product of his own misconceptions. His

[1] *Lib. Soliloquiorum*, ii. 1. [2] *De vera Religione*, 72, 73.
[3] *History of Philosophy*, i. 272.

presuppositions disabled him from assent to the religion of the Incarnation.

That was his principal difficulty. But it did not stand alone. There were the difficulties of biblical interpretation. He thought that no defence was possible for passages in Scripture which the Manichæans disapproved. Their criticism of the Old Testament seemed to him unanswerable. At the same time, he wished for some learned student of Scripture with whom he might confer.

What contributed to detain Augustine longer than might otherwise have been the case, first in Dualism and then in doubtfulness, was that in controversy against Christians his superior abilities generally secured him the victory![1] He constantly met with Catholics who were unable to defend the doctrines in which they believed, or to indicate the fallacies of the Dualistic system which he had accepted and had come to doubt, or to show him that he was labouring under misconceptions about Christian theology and ascribing to the Church theories which it did not maintain. The incompetence of ill-instructed Catholics retarded his advance. While he had found a very able exponent of Manichæan ideas, he had met with no equally able exponent of the Creed of the Church. He seemed to realize that Christian representatives failed to do justice to their own cause. He wanted a more intelligent instruction in Christian principles than he had hitherto encountered. And yet he seems to have made no effort to consult any Christian authority in Rome.

Meanwhile he was not happy in the outward conditions of his career. The conduct of the students at Rome in his lecture room was no better than that of the young men at Carthage. They were not so turbulent, but they were more dishonest. They had no scruple in deserting one lecturer for another without paying any fees.

[1] *De duabus Anim.*, 11.

Rome in no way satisfied Augustine's aspirations.

Just at this crisis (A.D. 384) came a request from the city of Milan asking the Roman Prefect, Symmachus, in his official capacity, to nominate for them a public teacher of rhetoric. The Manichæans in Rome seized the opportunity to advance their brilliant, if vacillating and only nominal, adherent. Symmachus was favourable. It was a singular selection: a fact which the brevity of Augustine's reference to it ought not to cause the reader to overlook. For Symmachus, Prefect of Rome, was the chief supporter of the pagan divinities. His celebrated speech on behalf of retaining the pagan altar of Victory in the Senate House of the imperial city was one of the last and ablest attempts of the dying religion to resist the encroachments of Christianity. The chief opponent of Symmachus and his paganism was Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. It is one of the ironies of history that the Manichæan opponents of Christianity contributed to send Augustine where he would learn it; and that Symmachus, the ardent defender of paganism, should have placed Augustine under Ambrose's influence, and so promoted the conversion to Christianity of its greatest exponent since St. Paul. If either the adherents of Dualism, or the pagan statesman, could have even dimly foreseen the course of events, they would rather have suppressed the office than have sent Augustine to Milan.

CHAPTER IV

AUGUSTINE AS A NEOPLATONIST

DURING the period of Augustine's residence as a teacher in Rome a third system of thought had been attracting his mind. Dualism had failed to satisfy. Its theory of the coexistence of two eternal antagonistic principles of good and evil could not permanently provide an explanation of the facts of the moral life. Neither could scepticism retain him. He felt the force of the negative position. But a mind like his could never permanently acquiesce in an attitude of suspense and indecision. He was open to the influence of some other interpretation of existence, provided that some intellectually satisfying system could be found. He was in a teachable frame of mind if a competent teacher appeared.[1] While in this inquiring mood he encountered the powerful influence of Neoplatonism. Neoplatonism was the last philosophic expression of the ancient world. Its principal exponent was Plotinus, an extraordinarily profound and gifted teacher. His biographer, Porphyry, intimate friend and disciple over many years, has bequeathed a most instructive picture of his career and character. He was born in A.D. 205 of a wealthy family, and learnt philosophy in the Platonist School of Alexandria. He appears to have felt a deep regard for Origen. When Origen entered the lecture room Plotinus declared that he had nothing to say which Origen did not already know.

[1] *Conf.*, vii. 13.

Plotinus himself attracted admirers in the highest ranks of social life. Among these was the Emperor Gordian, whom he accompanied in his military expedition to Persia. A resident at Alexandria was on the high road to the East, and Plotinus is thought to have been influenced by Indian speculations. When he was forty years old Plotinus left Alexandria for Rome, where he lived for many years. Here, as in the former city, he was surrounded by distinguished people. The Emperor Galienus and the Empress Salonina held him in high esteem. But the thinker was not exactly in his element in the imperial city. He dreamed of founding a city in the Campagna to be inhabited exclusively by the philosophically minded—ruled by Platonic theories, and to be known by the name of Platonopolis. To this vision of a Utopia the ruler of the Empire listened indulgently, and would have promoted it. But his advisers appear to have dissuaded him, on the ground that the philosophers had not the qualifications required for the administration of a city.

According to the Neoplatonist philosophy, the Ultimate Reality is what can only be termed Being or Unity. It is a supreme principle, unconditioned, indescribable. Nothing can be predicated concerning it because nothing can be known. Plotinus' theory may be clearly seen from his own words:—

> "The Absolute is none of the things of which it is the source. Its nature is that nothing can be affirmed of it—not existence, not essence, not life—since it is that which transcends all these. . . . Once you have uttered the 'Good,' add no further thought to it: by any addition, and in proportion to that addition, you introduce a deficiency. Do not even say it has Intellection: you would be dividing it." [1]

[1] *Ennead.*, iii. 8–10 (McKenna, ii. 134).

If we call it the good, we do not intend any formal affirmation of a quality within itself: we mean only that it is the Goal or Term to which all aspire. When we affirm existence of it, we mean no more than that it does not fall within the realm of non-existents; it transcends even the quality of being.[1]

Such, then, according to Plotinus, is the Ultimate Reality. Neither thought, nor consciousness, nor will, nor any moral characteristics whatever, can be ascribed to it. Existence is conceded to it, but nothing else. In a sense it can be considered good, because all else has its meaning in this pure Being. But, strictly speaking, it is beyond good and evil. For moral qualities imply limitations, and therefore cannot exist in the absolute unity. It is the super-good. Precisely for the same reason this original first principle cannot be the possessor of intelligence. For intellect perceives what is prior to itself. And thereby assumes at once a secondary and subordinate position. Intellect distinguishes and differentiates. It becomes various, multitudinous. It is not unity. Therefore the Ultimate Reality cannot be intellect. We are unable to define it or determine what it is. All we can do is to affirm what it is not. Thus the first principle of all things is the indefinable; what has since been called the Unknowable.

But out of this indescribable Unknown there emanates a second principle. This second principle is intelligence.

A third principle emanates from Unity. And this is the Universal Soul.

These three principles are not three Deities. They all exist within the self-same Deity. And yet they are not only different, they are unequal. The third is inferior to the second, and the second to the first. The third is the product of the second, and the second of the first.

[1] McKenna, i. 118.

Yet, in spite of this inferiority, they are both included in Deity.[1]

It might have been thought that an ultimate reality conceived in terms like these left little room for religious aspiration. This, however, is exactly the contrary to the effect which it produced on Plotinus. He was of a strongly mystical nature. And this indescribable Absolute became to him the object of intense delight and admiration. He aspires to arrive at the vision of "the One." He strives to behold the Ineffable. It surrounds his whole soul with its splendour. It is compared to light. It is a vision to which no man can ascend so long as he is drawn downward by those things which are an impediment to the vision. This ultimate principle Plotinus calls God. It is not distant, nor indeed external; but present with all things, although they may be ignorant that it is so. Just as a choir of singers may be distracted from their leader and become discordant, but, on returning to him, sing well, and truly exist, "thus we also perpetually revolve about the principle of all things, even when we are completely loosened from it, and have no knowledge of it." But when we return to it, "then we are no longer discordant, but form a truly divine dance about it." [2]

And so Plotinus could teach that "Since the soul is different from God, but is derived from Him, she necessarily loves Him." This is a celestial love, a divine love, a love of that which is divine. Plotinus speaks of participation in Deity. When the soul becomes illuminated and full of intelligible light, it becomes god-like. This is precisely what Plotinus means, although what he actually says is, that the soul becomes to be a god.

And yet Plotinus is well aware that this god-like human

[1] *Ennead.*, vi., ix. 2, 3. Cf. Jules Simon, *Histoire de l'École d'Alexandrie*, i. 297–299.
[2] *Ennead.*, vi., ix. 4, 7, 8.

soul does not maintain itself upon these lofty heights. Why is it, he asks, that it falls away? He looks to a time when the soul's vision of Deity will possess an uninterrupted continuity, when intuition will be no longer hindered by the body. And so Plotinus achieves his exposition in the wonderful phrase that the blessedness of man consists in a liberation from all earthly concern, a life unaccompanied by human pleasures, " a flight of the alone to the alone." [1]

Neoplatonism was, therefore, deeply concerned with moral ideals: for it is only through discipline of self that this mystic elevation can be achieved. Man is not to live according to nature, but according to reason. The lower inclinations must be overcome, and the spiritual man must subdue the natural. He was to withdraw from the outer world of appearance into the contemplation of ideas.

Plotinus was profoundly convinced of the immortality of the soul. He held that the soul possesses life derived from itself, and therefore would never lose it. He had no doubt that the intellectual and reflective soul, when it contemplates itself, is instinctively convinced that it is immortal. How and why the intelligible soul descended into a body was not so easy to explain. But Plotinus seems to have expected for the nobler souls an ultimate liberation from the body. He believed also that the nobler souls, after deliverance from the body, continue to confer benefits on mankind, and that these influences are a proof of the soul's immortality.[2]

It is very difficult to be sure at times exactly what Plotinus means. His modern exponents differ considerably in their account of him. He seems to have accepted the theory of transmigration of souls from one earthly existence to another, even from human forms to inferior animals.

[1] *Ennead.*, vi., ix. 11.

[2] *Ennead.*, iv., vii.

Religious aspiration toward union with the Ultimate Reality is intensely strong in the mysticism of the Neoplatonist.[1]

It is illuminating to remember how Neoplatonism appeared to one of the profoundest thinkers of our time. Von Hügel saw in Plotinus a ceaseless conflict between the abstractions of a philosopher and the experiences of a profoundly religious soul. As a philosopher, Plotinus leaves the Deity without qualities, and conceives man's approach to Him as a literal emptying of himself, even down to his ethical qualities. As a religious soul, Plotinus ever turns to, thirsts after, and loves that Deity, whom, in spite of these philosophical principles, he continuously discovers to be a very ocean of life and lovableness, hence surely of love also.[2]

Augustine says, in one of his letters,[3] that the School of Plotinus flourished in Rome, and that he had many followers among the cleverest and most capable men.

With this Neoplatonic religious philosophy Augustine became acquainted, through the Latin translation of Plotinus made by the celebrated Roman teacher of rhetoric, Marius Victorinus. The translator was a man of immense reputation. Most of the cultured people in Rome had been his pupils. He was held in such esteem that his statue was erected in the Roman Forum while he was still living. He died only a very few years before Augustine visited Rome. His translation of Plotinus has perished, and the student can only wonder what it must have been like. For Plotinus is a singularly difficult writer, and Victorinus, in his writings which survive, is also extraordinarily difficult and obscure. However, Augustine studied him, and imbibed large elements of Neoplatonist principles.

[1] See Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, i. 385.
[2] Cf. von Hügel, *Eternal Life*, p. 82. [3] *Ep.*, cxviii.

There was much in this religious philosophy which commended it to a man of Augustine's disposition. Its speculative superiority to Manichæan Dualism was unmistakable. Its moral superiority was equally clear. Its intensely religious feeling appealed strongly to the great African's spiritual instincts. His mystical tendencies found in Neoplatonism a sanction which Manichæism could not provide. As a refutation of materialism it was an immense relief. It delivered him from many of the perplexities in which Dualism had entangled him. It fully recognized—nay, it insisted most impressively on—the unfathomable and the unknown. It regarded the Ultimate Reality as ascertained by intuition rather than by intellect and demonstration. Thus it introduced into the interpretation of life elements which the narrow logic of the Manichæan had excluded. It got rid of the localized Heaven and the materialized Deity of his former belief. The crude mythology of the Manichæan disappeared in a conception of extraordinary grandeur and sublimity.

To a man emerging from Persian Dualism the intellectual and the religious attractions of Neoplatonism were therefore very great. Dualism is, of course, one of the chief explanations of the Universe. But the human mind is strongly drawn towards unity. It seeks after one ultimate principle in which the contradictions which disturb our reason and our affections can be reconciled. Augustine's constant preoccupation was a search for unity beneath the endless diversity confronting him. That longing for unity Neoplatonism supplied.

The religious attractions of Neoplatonism were no less effective. For this philosophy is the product of a powerful mind and a religious spirit. And the religious interests were to its founder supreme. His mystical tendencies are most remarkable. Plotinus could speak of the individual soul in its aspiration " being liberated from deception and from the allurements which fascinate other souls, and becoming

established in quiet" to contemplate the soul of the Universe. "And let not only the body and the storms of the body be at rest, but the whole of that by which the soul is surrounded. Let the earth therefore be still; let the sea be still, the air, and the heavens themselves. . . ." After this "let the quiet soul contemplate the mighty soul of the universe." [1]

These thoughts, these very phrases, entered into Augustine's mind and took possession. Reminiscences of them will afterwards appear. Never before had he met anything like this. Augustine was fascinated. At a later date he left on record what he felt. He felt that this great philosophy had transferred the centre of interest from self to Deity. Whereas other philosophic explanations sought to satisfy human desires in man himself, either in the mind or in the body, or in both together, but still always in self, whether in the higher or lower elements of his nature, this Neoplatonic theory found the blessedness of man neither in the delights of the body nor in those of the mind, but in the enjoyment of Deity.[2]

This philosophy, therefore, Augustine embraced as the true and adequate explanation of life. And when its lofty character is considered, as well as its many affinities to Augustine's temperament, it might have been expected that here he would find a lasting rest. But there were many reasons why that was not possible.

The most singular fact about Plotinus is his invariable silence on the subject of Christianity. That he must have known of that religion his critics agree. His studies in Alexandria, his familiarity with the lecturers there, make it inconceivable that he should not have known. His disciple, Porphyry, wrote an attack on Christianity, but Plotinus himself says not a word about it.

But in Augustine's time Neoplatonist philosophy con-

[1] *Ennead.*, v. 1 (Taylor's Translation, p. 164).
[2] *De Civ. Dei*, viii. 8.

stantly became a stage of transition to Christianity. Augustine was afterwards to learn that the translator of this philosophy into Latin himself became a convert to Christianity. He did not discover this fact until later. Victorinus was for him at present nothing more than an exponent of philosophy who found satisfaction in the Neoplatonist ideas.

The fundamental difficulty with Neoplatonism is that its intellectual theories are in conflict with its religious aspirations. As a philosophy it presents us with an Ultimate Reality to which nothing save existence can be ascribed. As a religion it professes the mystical ascent of the human soul to this unknown and indescribable. Thus a religious attitude is demanded toward an abstraction to which no qualities, either intellectual or moral, can be attributed. Neoplatonism is essentially pantheistic. Plotinus, indeed, speaks of the ultimate principle as an object of prayer. But since personality could not be predicated of the first principle, what object was there to which prayer could be addressed? Prayer addressed to a Being which knew nothing of the existence of the person praying could obviously not be prayer such as a theist, least of all a Christian, understands by prayer. There could be no mutual inter-communion between God and men under such a theory. There could, of course, be admiration for an abstract idea, but there could be no personal relations. Religion demands a person to whom the worshipper can say Thou. Recent critics have naturally remarked on the strong tendency in Neoplatonism towards absorption of the human self in a Deity pantheistically conceived.[1] Or, as another critic puts it, "Its lofty idealism is most impressive, but its way to union with the one Being is a leap into the abyss."[2]

[1] Cf. Wobbermin, *Das Wesen der Religion* (1921), p. 78.
[2] R. Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, i. 385.

It is easily intelligible, therefore, that, however greatly this lofty theory of Plotinus commended itself to Augustine's mind, and however greatly its mysticism appealed to his spiritual instincts, yet the discrepancy between it as a philosophy and as a religion could not for long remain concealed from his profoundly religious disposition. It is impossible to read the pages of his Confessions without seeing that with all his soul he stood in need of a living God. Nothing less than Theism could ever satisfy that thirst for Deity. It was utterly out of the question for him to find permanent satisfaction in any form of Pantheistic thought. But it is a most remarkable thing that this great and gifted mind should have tried one after another the various great alternative accounts of life—Dualism, Scepticism, Pantheism, Augustine entered into and passed through them all, before he came to win the final satisfaction of his needs.

How the last transition happened, the subsequent chapters of his life must show.

It is clear that Augustine did not confine himself to the philosophy of Plotinus, but that he was led on from studying Platonism in its latest form to read some of the works of Plato himself. Several treatises of the greatest of the Greek thinkers were accessible in Latin. Indeed, Platonism had been taught long before in Africa by Augustine's fellow-countryman Apuleius, the philosopher of Madaura, whose influence in cultured circles at Carthage, where he lectured, had been considerable, and who died about A.D. 190.[1] It is indeed a curious thing that so eager, restless and inquiring a mind as Augustine should have been a teacher in Carthage without any apparent acquaintance with the Platonism of this celebrated man. But that Augustine read the philosophic writings of Apuleius is certain, for he quotes them freely in his great work on the City of God. The probability is that Augus-

[1] Apuleius, *On the Doctrine of Plato*, Book 1.

tine read these Platonist writings either at Rome, or during his residence at Milan.

The ideas which impressed him in Apuleius were that there is a Sovereign Providence. And God is not the cause of evil. Nor can everything be ascribed to Fate. After a sort of Deist theory the philosopher of Madaura maintained that the Father and Architect of the Universe created laws, and left their administration to the charge of inferior Divinities who became a secondary Providence by carrying the divine decrees into effect.

Then, further, concerning an inquiring spirit, Apuleius held that a man who is by nature disposed to seek for what is good, does not only seek in his own behalf, but for the sake of all mankind. Man, when he enters the world, is neither absolutely good nor absolutely evil: but his tendency is toward one or other of these two conditions. He is born with both these rival tendencies. Hence the purpose of education is to inspire the love of good, and thereby subordinate the lower to the higher.

Augustine also found Apuleius enlarging on the theory of intermediate beings: beings inferior to the Deities, but superior to men.[1] They were passive in soul, rational in mind, aerial in body, eternal in time, inspirers of sooth-sayers and prophets, acting as mediators between gods and men. They were necessary in order to present our prayers to the gods, and yet their works are such as we must shun if we wish our prayer to reach the true God. The usual opinion was that some of the demons were good, and others evil. But Apuleius has nothing to say about their virtues. In his opinion they are but a sea tossed with tempest. They have no truth or doctrine in their souls by which to resist their turbulent and depraved emotions. Apuleius explains that gods dwell in heaven, demons in the air, and men on earth. The dwellers in

[1] *De Civ. Dei*, viii. 14, 16, 18, 19.

heaven were distinguished by "sublimity of abode, perpetuity of life, and perfection of nature." [1]

Augustine quoted from Apuleius a fine passage well adapted to his own mental agitations. Men were characterized as endowed with reason and fluent of speech: their souls are immortal, their bodies perish. Their minds are restless and superficial, their bodies gross and frail. Dissimilar in morals, but alike in their errors; headstrong in wilfulness, buoyantly hopeful, vain in their efforts, inconstant of fortune, transient as units, continuous as a race, renewed in their successors, their time is brief, their wisdom lingers, their death is speedy, and their life full of complaining.

There was, indeed, according to the Platonist Apuleius, a Supreme Deity, not indeed aloof from care for things human, but aloof from their administration. There were intermediate Divinities who conveyed our requests and brought back replies.

This earlier type of Greek philosophy was comparatively free from the tendency to Pantheism by which the later type was beset. It laid great stress on the principle of mediation.

But, on the other hand, one very distinctive dogma of Apuleius, and gravely affecting the relation of any of his adherents to Christianity, was that no god holds intercourse with men. The dwellers in the heavenly realm are never contaminated by contact with human beings. The supreme Deity was inaccessible. He is not only indescribable, but even the wise when delivered from the burden of the body have only such gleams of insight into His nature as may be compared to a flash of lightning illumining the darkness.[2]

[1] Cf. Apuleius, *The God of Socrates* (quoted in *De Civ. Dei*, ix. 2, 3, 8, 12).

[2] *De Civ. Dei*, ix. 16.

While Augustine was resident at Milan he not only studied philosophy in books, but also had the advantage of a living exponent of Platonism in the person of Manlius Theodorus, a distinguished citizen, wealthy, highly cultured, and of marked intellectual power.[1] Platonist philosophy had led Theodorus to embrace the Christian faith. Both Monnica and Augustine were acquainted with Theodorus, whose position is shown in the fact that some ten years later he rose to the dignity of Consul. A panegyric commemorating his abilities, by the poet Claudian, still survives.

[1] Cf. *de Ordine*, i. 31.

CHAPTER V

AUGUSTINE AND AMBROSE

IT is a noticeable fact that during the whole of Augustine's residence in Rome the Church appears to have exerted no influence over him. Yet it was a period of energetic life in the Church of the imperial city. These were the days when Jerome was living there (382–385), vigorously preaching his austere crusade on behalf of Monasticism, creating much sensation both of approval and resentment, and drawing many of the great ladies of Rome to convert their palaces into convents, and to attend the preacher's lectures on Greek and Hebrew. Augustine and Jerome were to correspond in after years; but although they were both in Rome they do not seem to have met. Damasus had been Pope for nearly eighteen years, and had laboured to kindle zeal for the heroes of the Catholic past by making the graves of the martyrs and the Catacombs accessible to Christian veneration. But none of this seems to have arrested Augustine's attention. He was living among Manichæans in an atmosphere secluded from and antagonistic to the influence of the Church, although by no means inaccessible to Neoplatonist philosophy, which was secretly undermining Augustine's attachment to the Dualistic theories which had captivated him. He remained a nominal adherent of Manichæan religion, although gradually ceasing to share its principles.

It was probably fortunate that Augustine did not

encounter Jerome in Rome. Jerome the austere and caustic, with his violent temper and controversial ferocity, could never have attracted him as Ambrose did.

It was the year 384 when Augustine removed from Rome to Milan. Ambrose had already occupied the Episcopal throne ten years, and was now at the height of his reputation. He was by far the most conspicuous ecclesiastic in the West. He had been the spiritual instructor to a number of imperial personages in succession. Valentinian, Gratian, Theodosius, all submitted themselves to his direction. His work on Faith, written at Gratian's request for the Emperor's enlightenment and guidance in the perplexities of the discordant theological theories which surrounded him, had already appeared. The widowed Empress Justina placed her young son, Valentinian the Second, under Ambrose's protection.

At the very time of Augustine's entering into residence at Milan, Symmachus, the prefect, had appealed to the young Emperor Valentinian to restore the Altar of Victory in the Senate House at Rome, which his predecessor, the Emperor Gratian, had removed. Ambrose immediately wrote his celebrated protest, and the altar was not restored.

His influence was by no means confined to high places. It extended over the whole Christian population of the city which had spontaneously chosen him to be their chief. His attractiveness as a preacher was also remarkable. No nobler illustration of the Christian spirit could have been found in the days when Augustine entered. The African layman came therefore under the best Christian influence that his age possessed.

Augustine's first interview with Ambrose was more or less of a purely formal character. The newly appointed official lecturer paid his respects to the chief ecclesiastical authority in the city.

Ambrose contributed immensely to Augustine's progress towards the faith. This service was rendered very largely through his preaching. Augustine went to hear the Bishop preach: but chiefly out of curiosity, to see whether his abilities corresponded with his reputation. For the layman did not regard the priest as a teacher of truth, which indeed as yet he had no hope of finding in the Church. His attitude was not hostile, but critical. He made a mental comparison between Ambrose and Faustus the Manichæan. His verdict was that Ambrose was not so attractive a speaker as Faustus, but incomparably superior to him in the substance of his teaching.

Augustine's interest was at first confined to the preacher's style. But gradually the substance won attention as well as the words. While he listened critically to observe how ably Ambrose spoke, he began to realize how true was the thing which he was speaking. He began to think that the Catholic faith was capable of defence.

He was greatly impressed by the allegorical method of interpretation which Ambrose had learnt from Origen's works and the Alexandrian school. It was apparently his first introduction to this way of explaining Scripture. And it came as a great relief, for it removed many difficulties which a literal rendering of the Old Testament presented, and which, when he heard them criticized by the Manichæans, had appeared to him insuperable. Augustine heard from the pulpit at Milan the famous distinction drawn between the letter that killeth and the spirit that giveth life. By which maxim the allegorical exponent understood that the literal meaning of a text was injurious, and the mystical meaning beneficial. This method was applied to Scripture to evade the literal sense, and to deduce meanings which were often purely fanciful and irrelevant. Many a passage in the Old Testament ceased to be regarded as true, and the diffi-

culties presented by them to Augustine's mind disappeared. Augustine, at this period of his development, saw the advantages of this system, but was blind to its dangers. He did not realize how easily the allegorical method undermined all historic security and belief in fact. It was not until a later time that he came to insist on the importance of the literal interpretation as being the basis of all else.

Then, further, and to his surprise, he found that the preacher at Milan was teaching the doctrine of the spiritual nature of God. This doctrine he was already constrained by his studies in Neoplatonism to regard as immeasurably superior to the Dualistic conception of substance held among the Manichæans.

It is plain that Augustine heard in Milan for the first time in his life an adequate exposition of the Catholic faith. He had resided both in Carthage and in Rome, great cities where the Church was a living power. But in neither had he learned the distinctive principles of Christianity. He now began to discover that in various matters he had laboured under serious misapprehension as to what the Church's doctrine really was. He felt that difficulties were being gradually dispelled. At the same time, the removal of certain difficulties did not prove the truth of the Christian faith. If the Catholic religion was not conquered, neither could it as yet be pronounced victorious. There was a long way yet to go.

However, he now got so far as to sever his connection with the Manichæan sect. Adherence to any definite religion in a state of suspended judgment was unreasonable. The Academic philosophy seemed more attractive than the Manichæan religion. But there was one central fact which this philosophy of doubt omitted. That central fact was Christ. This name, and some at least of its implications, remained in Augustine's possession

from the days of his youth. Accordingly, feeling, apparently under Ambrose's influence, that he had never done justice to the Church to which his mother had entrusted him, he continued to hear instruction in Christian faith, at any rate to hear what it had to say until further light should dawn.

The next important incident was Monnica's arrival at Milan.

Augustine told his mother that he was now neither a Manichæan nor yet a Catholic. She received the announcement without surprise, but with exceeding joyfulness, and confidently declared her conviction that she would see him a faithful Catholic before she died.

Monnica soon found her way to the Cathedral and to the Bishop. Her veneration for Ambrose was unbounded, chiefly because she saw that his influence had attracted and steadied her son, and brought him to this more hopeful state. She renewed her prayers for him, and constantly frequented St. Ambrose's preaching. She conformed at once to the customs of the Church at Milan, although they differed from those in Africa. Augustine accompanied his mother to church and in her visits to the Bishop. Ambrose congratulated him on having such a mother. But Augustine adds that Ambrose had no idea what sort of son she had.

Neither Augustine nor his friend Alypius had grasped the Church's doctrine of the Person of Christ until they came under St. Ambrose's teaching. Augustine had accepted an heretical theory under the impression that it was the Church's faith.[1] That theory was that Jesus had no existence prior to His appearance on earth. He was miraculously born of a Virgin, and was marvellously illumined and guided by the Word of God, so that He became in consequence the Son of God. In other words,

[1] *Conf.*, vii. 25.

He was purely human, but the greatest of all divinely gifted prophets and teachers. That erroneous theory Ambrose had already shown in his work on the Christian faith to be contrary alike to the teaching of Scripture and of the Church. "This is the declaration of our faith," wrote Ambrose, "that He was begotten of the Father before all worlds, and afterwards born of the Virgin." [1] Augustine at a later date acknowledges that in this earlier period he had no conception that the Word was made flesh.[2]

His own experience adds much force to the reflections which he wrote about this doctrine many long years afterwards. "Such is the depth of the Christian Scriptures that even if I were attempting to study them and nothing else from early youth to old age with the utmost leisure, the most unwearied zeal, and talents greater than I have, I would be still daily making progress in discovering their treasures; not that there is so great difficulty in coming through them to know the things necessary to salvation, but when any one has accepted these truths with the faith that is indispensable as the foundation of a life of piety and uprightness, so many things which are veiled under manifold shadows of mystery remain to be inquired into by those who are advancing in the study, and so great is the depth of wisdom not only in the words in which these have been expressed, but also in the things themselves, that the experience of the oldest, the ablest and the most zealous students of Scripture illustrates what Scripture itself has said: 'When a man hath done then he beginneth' (Ecclus. xviii. 6)." [3]

Another great conception which was for many reasons impressed with exceptional directness on every person in Milan was the conception of the authority of the Church. The Church was a visible institution in which authority

[1] *De Fide*, 1. 6. [2] *Conf.*, vii. 25. [3] *Ep.*, cxxxvii. 4.

was embodied. The principle of corporate authority in religion could hardly have had a better exponent than Ambrose. The former prefect of the city, with his administrative capacities and his judicial mind, accustomed to be the authoritative representative of the imperial institutions before he was ordained, entered thoroughly into the traditional conception of the Church as endowed in its own sphere with the highest authority. He taught in the Cathedral at Milan as the exponent of corporate beliefs, not as an advocate of individual opinions. He appealed to the authoritative expression of the Church's faith formulated in the Council of Nicæa. He spoke as one having high official authority within a divinely created and organized institution. His conception of the Church as independent of the State and as superior to it in all things spiritual is too well known to need explaining. But Augustine witnessed the practical outcome of this lofty conception of ecclesiastical authority when the imperial power attempted in Milan to confiscate a Church and to introduce unorthodox teachers into the pastoral office there. The magnificent firmness of the Bishop made on Augustine a deep and permanent impression. The layman's increasing sense of the need of some authority in religion to remedy the limitations of the individual led him naturally to appreciate this conception of the Church's nature. It harmonized with and responded to his personal requirements.

In this spirit he witnessed the troubled times which fell on the Church at Milan. The Emperor Valentinian the Second was a boy, and his mother Justina ruled. Justina, although availing herself of Ambrose's powerful influence in political crises, detested his religion, for she was an Arian. Ambrose had protected the throne by discharging a dangerous embassy to the usurper Maximus (A.D. 385); but gratitude did not prevent Justina from

requiring the Bishop to surrender one of the churches in Milan for Arian worship.[1]

Milan was at the time the imperial residence. High officials of State, including the Prefect, visited Ambrose and advised obedience. Ambrose declined. They urged that the Emperor was within his rights. Ambrose replied that the imperial power did not extend to sacred things. Meanwhile, the city was in an uproar. The officials, being alarmed, begged the Bishop to quiet the people. Ambrose replied that it was in his power not to excite them, but in God's hand to pacify them. Crowds gathered in the church, and Ambrose preached. Monnica and Augustine were both there. Ambrose's extraordinary ascendency may be gathered from the fact that he recommended the people to abstain from communion with the soldiers if the latter opposed the faith. On hearing this, the soldiers themselves poured into the church. They were on Ambrose's side. They assured the frightened congregation that they were come to pray, not to fight.

Ambrose explained his refusal to surrender the Basilica. The palace is the Emperor's, the churches are the Bishop's. The imperial jurisdiction extends over public, but not over sacred buildings. Referring to the soldiers, Ambrose said: "The heathen are come into Thine inheritance. They came as heathens, but they were made Christians. They who came to invade God's inheritance, are made soldiers of God. Those whom I accounted enemies are become my defenders. I have as comrades those whom I esteemed as adversaries. Whose work is this but Thine, Lord Jesus! Thou sawest armed men coming to Thy temple; on the one hand the people lamenting and crowding that they might not seem to give up the Church, on the other the soldiers commanded to use force. . . . But Thou, O Lord, plantedst Thyself

[1] St. Ambrose, *Ep.*, xx.

in the midst, and madest the twain one." Ambrose was accused by State officials of domineering over the Emperor. "'I asked them,'" said the Bishop, "'if they considered my power unlawful, why did they delay to strike me? The power of a Priest is in his weakness.' 'Do you despise Valentinian?' retorted Calligonus, the Grand Chamberlain, 'I will have your head.' I replied: 'May God grant you to fulfil your threat: I shall suffer as becomes a Bishop, you will act as befits a eunuch.'"

Baffled for the moment in securing a church for Arian worship, the Emperor was induced to challenge Ambrose to a public discussion of doctrine before him.

Then Ambrose wrote a letter to Valentinian,[1] with all the whole weight of his Episcopal authority. "When have you ever heard, most gracious Emperor, that laymen had judged a Bishop in a matter pertaining to the faith? . . . Assuredly, if we revert to the volume of Holy Scripture, or to the time of old, who is there who will deny that in a cause of the Faith, in a cause, I say, of the Faith, Bishops are wont to judge Christian Emperors, not Emperors to judge Bishops. Hereafter you will by God's favour reach a more mature age, and then you will judge what kind of Bishop he must be who submits the rights of the priesthood to laymen. Your father, who by God's favour attained a riper age, used to say: 'It is not for me to judge between Bishops': your Majesty now says, 'I ought to judge.' He, although baptized into Christ, considered himself unequal to the weight of so important a judgment. Does your Majesty, who have yet to earn for yourself the Sacrament of Baptism, claim to decide concerning the Faith, although still ignorant of the Sacrament of this Faith?"

Accordingly, the Bishop declined to submit the doctrine of the Church to the arbitration of State officials.

Thereupon the struggle to secure a Basilica for the

[1] *Ep.*, xxi.

Arians was renewed. Ambrose remained in the church, jealously guarded night and day by his devoted people. In the suspense and excitement of those hours he addressed them with very great dignity, as in earlier days a martyr might have spoken near his death.[1]

"Let the people rest assured that he would not abandon the Church to save his life. He feared the Lord of the Universe more than the secular powers. He steadily contemplates the possibility of martyrdom. Wounds borne for Christ's sake are not losses. Life is not lost by them, but rather increased. If men will risk life for glory, why not for Christ? Who knows whether Christ has not said of Ambrose, the Lord hath need of him. Fear not, my beloved. Whatever I suffer, it will be for Christ. I have heard Him say, 'He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.'" Calmly the Archbishop counselled them to leave everything with God. Events would certainly take their course as Christ willed. Ambrose is under Christ's protection. Like Elisha in the besieged city, he could say, "They that be with us are more than they that be with them." To him, as to Peter in prison, God could send his angel. Yet deliverance, after all, can only be for a season. Could they forget the pathetic legend how the same St. Peter, at a later day, escaped again from prison, and for his people's sake passed out beyond the walls and there, as he issued into freedom, Christ confronted him? "Lord, whither goest Thou?" exclaimed the Apostle. His Lord replied, "I go to be crucified again." Then Peter understood. It was not the Lord's will that he should flee. He returned, delivered himself up, and by martyrdom rejoined his Lord. Who knows? Was Ambrose also reserved for such a death? Certainly, come what might, never with his consent should a sanctuary be surrendered to Arian

[1] *Sermo contra Auxentium de Basilicis tradendis* (*Works*, ii. 1007).

error. Like Naboth to Ahab, he would answer in a greater cause, "The Lord forbids it me that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee!" The Catholic inheritance! One after another his predecessors in the See of Milan had died maintaining the faith, and should Ambrose basely betray it? Ambrose must do the priest's part. Let the Emperor do his. He can take my life: he cannot touch my faith. Ambrose will render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's. Yes. But not the things which are God's. The Church is Christ's: His who said, "I and My Father are one." To surrender the Church to alien worship would be an insult to Christ's divinity. The Emperor is—and it is his greatest glory—a child of the Church. The Emperor is within the Church; but he is not above the Church.

Thus Ambrose taught them. And his opponents found that they had overreached themselves. So strong was the Bishop in the affections of his people that he was immovable even by imperial power. The authorities desisted, and Ambrose prevailed.

During this protracted strain the popular emotion was directed and subdued by the singing of psalms and hymns—a practice, Augustine tells us, now first introduced from the Churches of the East.[1] The hymns of St. Ambrose were almost certainly among the number. His solemn hymn of the Apostles—"The eternal gifts of Christ the King," sung among us to the present day—was in all probability first sung then.

Throughout these trials Monnica was constantly present. She bore a chief part in the anxiety and suspense. She lived in prayer. Augustine himself confesses that, although not yet in complete intellectual sympathy, his heart was stirred. The hymns of Ambrose were enshrined in his memory. They moved him to copious

[1] *Conf.*, ix. 15.

tears when he sang them after his conversion. They consoled him after his mother's death, supplied him with hope, and filled his thoughts as he lay sleepless in the night.[1]

> "How greatly did I weep in Thy hymns and canticles, deeply moved by the voices of Thy sweet-speaking Church! The voices flowed into mine ears, and the truth was poured forth into my heart, whence the agitation of my piety overflowed, and my tears ran over, and blessed was I therein." [2]

It is evident that the devotional atmosphere of the Church at Milan made a very strong appeal to Augustine's religious nature.

During the period of Augustine's stay in Milan, the Archbishop delivered a series of instructions on the tragic story of David's sin. Men had said in those days as since: Is this your man after God's own heart? Ambrose reminded his people that, terrible as David's degradation was, nevertheless, if we would do justice to his character, we must remember his repentance. David sinned. That is common with kings. David also repented. Which is precisely what kings fail to do. That David sinned is human, that he repented is exceptional. Men follow David into his sin; but they leave him when he rises into confession and repentance, and abandonment of sin. David strove by the good deeds of his subsequent career to make what atonement lay in his power for the sins and offences of his youth. This is exactly where he rises incomparably above ordinary men. Who can read the 51st Psalm and not exclaim: Sin is acknowledged and lamented in every line? Surely a repentance so intense would have a most purifying effect. Ambrose reiterates the single

[1] *Conf.*, ix. 32; x. 52. [2] *Conf.*, ix. 14.

phrase, "My sin is ever before me." The fool delights in his misdeeds, and adds sin to sin. But the wise man is self-condemned. Whatever occupation engages him, his own sin rises ever before him. He hears himself condemned in every waking voice. He applies to his own case the moral warning of each page he reads. In times of relaxation, in hours of thought, in the seclusion of prayer, his sin perpetually rises before him. Constantly it knocks at the door of his conscience, it forbids him to rest, it will not be forgotten. It is a constant accuser. It makes him afraid. He whose conscience reproves him has all things against him. He is his own accuser. He witnesses against himself. But it is a sign of possessing a right disposition to be thus sensitive over sin. He who reproaches himself for his misdeeds will less readily repeat the sin which he deplores. Thus David repented.

Certainly no religious teaching could well be better adapted to Augustine's condition. He was now drawn into an intensely religious atmosphere. He was encircled with devotional and spiritual life of a very lofty character. Catholicism displayed itself at its best: appealing to all that was noble in his nature, calling him out of sensuality and self-seeking, setting before him ideas of penitence and conversion, contrasting in powerful terms the higher and the lower life. The spiritual superiority of all this to his personal experience was incontestable. He might cling to the inferior and defend himself against the superior. He might defer the day of his repentance. But he could not deny the justice of the Christian appeal to his conscience and his heart. The period, of course, was very critical. It might have ended either way. But the example of Ambrose's fearless faith was magnificent.

It has often been remarked that the influence of Ambrose over Augustine was far more that of a preacher to the general congregation than that of a spiritual guide

intimately acquainted with the actual state of his soul. There was a distance which is not altogether easy to explain. This is confirmed by Augustine's inimitable picture of Ambrose in his study. The Bishop's study was a place of retreat from the pressure of a busy life of administration and public controversy. Ambrose took refuge there from the distractions besetting him. But the intervals were far too brief to satisfy his studious desires.

Augustine tells us how he penetrated, unannounced, as the custom was, into that studious retreat. There sat the Bishop reading silently. The silence impressed Augustine as unusual. It was usual to read aloud. Augustine watched without a word. Into that silent meditation he could not venture to intrude. He gazed on the great preacher silently, and as silently withdrew. Was Ambrose unaware of Augustine's presence? absorbed in meditation and lost to things around? It may be so. But Augustine gives no hint that this was the case. And certainly his mother was not satisfied. She sent her son to consult the Bishop, ostensibly in her own behalf, but unquestionably in order to keep him in touch with Ambrose, whose ascendency as a preacher she thankfully recognized. On such occasions Augustine got into conversation with the Bishop. Years afterwards he related in a letter the subject of one of his inquiries. Monnica discovered that, while the Church in Africa was accustomed to keep Saturday as a fast, the Church at Milan observed no such custom. She therefore sent Augustine to ask Ambrose's advice about her duty. Ambrose replied that when he was at Milan he did not fast on Saturday, but when at Rome he did. Accordingly, his recommendation was: whatever Church you visit, conform to its custom, if you would avoid either receiving or giving offence.[1]

[1] *Ep.*, xxxvi. 31. (396 A.D., to Casulanus.)

Inquiries of this kind reveal a certain intimacy between Ambrose and Augustine, at any rate on Monnica's behalf. Yet there is no trace that the layman confided in the Bishop his own personal needs. Nor is there any sign that the Bishop did much to guide him. Ambrose must have encountered Augustine sometimes in the latter's official work. For Augustine's professorship of rhetoric made him a sort of public orator for the city. He had, for instance, to deliver a public oration in praise of the Emperor Valentinian the Second. Ambrose had opportunities to discover the African's exceptional abilities. He also knew about his intellectual unsettlement. And this last may be the real explanation why the Bishop did not directly intervene. It has indeed been suggested that for a man of Ambrose's character it was not easy to sympathize with Augustine's vacillations. The clear-minded, unhesitating Roman, with his firm faith, strong convictions and authoritative disposition, might naturally fail to understand, indeed might indulge a certain impatience with, the vague, uncertain, largely emotional moods of the African temperament. It may be so. But it is also possible that the Bishop, with his large religious experience, deliberately refrained from intervention, on principle. He may have felt that Augustine was best left to mature gradually through his own reflections, on the ground that the less you argue with a man the more he will argue with himself. There are times for silence as well as times for speech.[1]

But if the Bishop did not deal much directly with the layman's personal needs, Augustine heard the preacher "every Lord's Day." And the influence of Ambrose over him was profound, and contributed immeasurably to lead him onward towards the faith.

[1] *Conf.*, vi. 6. *C. Litt. Petil.*, iii. 30.

CHAPTER VI

THE RELIGION OF AUTHORITY

AUGUSTINE now began to consider seriously the Christian doctrine that evil originates in the free determination of the will. The doctrine grew upon him and commended itself. He was as convinced that he possessed the power of will as he was that he existed. But the problem how evil first began was by no means solved. It was useless to transfer the responsibility of its authorship to Satan. For whence came Satan? If he were a degraded angel, whence came the evil which wrought the degradation? Seeing that, according to Christian religion, an angel, being created by a good Creator, was created good. Augustine could not fathom it.[1]

Reflecting further concerning God, Augustine sees that the divine Nature must be incorruptible. And why? Because if it were not so it would lie within the power of human thought to conceive something better than God.[2]

The presupposition is that God is the realized ideal of all perfection. Here, in Augustine's language, is certainly the germ of the famous sentence of Anselm, that God is that than which no greater can be conceived.[3]

[1] *Conf.*, vii. 5.

[2] Poteram jam cogitatione aliquid attingere quod esset melius Deo meo, nisi Tu esses incorruptibilis, vii. 6.

[3] Credimus Te esse aliquid, quo nihil majus cogitari possit. *Proslogion*, Chap. II.

Anselm taught that the idea of God involves His existence. Augustine taught that the idea of God involves incorruptibility. Both base their argument on the principle that nothing superior to God can be conceived, the fundamental idea of Deity being perfection.

Then he passes on to the relation of God to the world. And here he propounds a theory of divine immanence. God is like a sea extended infinitely and pervading everything. Plunged in that sea, like a huge but finite sponge, is the creation. But, then, it is impossible to escape the problem, whence is evil? God made all things. He that is good made good things. Did He leave any element of evil in them? But why should God do so? Could the Almighty be unable to remove all evil from His work? Could He not convert it into good? Moreover, why did God make anything at all? Or could anything exist against His will? Or was matter eternal? If so, why did God allow ages to elapse before He formed anything out of it? Question after question confronted Augustine, and the solution baffled him.[1]

Nevertheless, unsolved, perhaps insoluble, problems are no refutation of religion.

He had long been haunted by belief that a man's destiny depended on the conjunction of stars under which he happened to be born. He was for a time fascinated by astrology. From these fatalistic ideas he was delivered partly by the efforts of Nebridius, and partly by another highly cultured man. What convinced him of the futility of the theory was the well-attested case of two children born precisely at the same moment, one of whom became wealthy, and the other a slave.[2]

Reflecting again and again on the problem of evil, Augustine now considers that things which are capable

[1] *Conf.*, vii. 6. [2] *Conf.*, vii. 7.

of being corrupted are intrinsically good. Corruption is a diminution of good. The misconception under which he had previously laboured was that evil was an eternal substance. This materialistic conception of the nature of evil was due to his Dualistic period. It was the very essence of Manichæism. He now came to the conclusion that evil is negative. It is not a substance, but the privation of good. Every created thing is in itself good. The viper and the worm are in themselves good, although in certain respects they may be injurious.[1]

Augustine's intellectual condition, then, at this stage of his residence in Milan was obviously one of much bewilderment and confusion. He was in a state of reaction from various conflicting theories which had greatly attracted him. Dualism had been in theory abandoned, but its influence remained. Principles absorbed for years were not easily to be dispelled. Many a critic has affirmed that Augustine never entirely escaped. Scepticism had been rapidly replaced by Plotinean philosophy and its accompanying mysticism. But Scepticism, uncongenial though it was to his deeply religious nature, continued to affect his outlook, to multiply misgivings and to depress his spirit. Neoplatonism itself, fascinating though it was, alike for its daring speculative sublimity and its religious sentiment, left him, in spite of these things, still unsatisfied. The secret reason of this discontent was undoubtedly because this last philosophy of the ancient world provided no adequate personal Deity, and fell immeasurably beneath the divine object of a Christian's adoration.

What weighed heavily upon Augustine's mind was the multitude of intellectual theories and conflicting conceptions which men of genius presented. Many of the most

[1] *Conf.*, vii. 18–22.

gifted and learned of men had proved unable to determine what is Truth. Confronted with this unquestionable fact, what better fate could he expect than theirs? Reflection on this incompetence of the intellectual filled him with profound discouragement. He hesitated between the great alternatives, What was he to accept, and what reject? This perplexity seemed daily to increase.[1]

On the other hand, many of his objections against Christianity were diminished, or had even been already solved. Some of the difficulties which he had felt were simply due to misunderstanding. Christianity did not really maintain what Augustine had supposed. Other difficulties had been removed by the instruction given from the Cathedral pulpit in Milan. The allegorical interpretation had come as a great relief, dispelling many a problem in the older Scriptures of the Jew.

Augustine was thus quite naturally brought to reconsider the original ground of his rejection of Christianity. He had rejected it because it affirmed what it did not prove. It was a religion of authority. He demanded a religion of reason. Assent should be given to nothing which could not be demonstrated beyond dispute. That was the claim which Dualism had declared itself prepared to satisfy. But it was a claim which Dualism most emphatically had not satisfied. A mind so penetrating as Augustine's could not permanently fail to see that the Dualism to which he had yielded assent had never demonstrated its fundamental principles, least of all its weird mythology. Nor could Augustine fail to realize that Neoplatonism itself, whether regarded as a philosophy or as a religion, was in no better case; it certainly provided no demonstration of the theories which it affirmed. It was no more possible to demonstrate the Neoplatonist

[1] *C. Acad.*, ii. 23. *De Util. Cred.*, 20.

Trinity of emanations than the Trinity of eternal personal distinctions within the Deity which constituted the basis of the Catholic Faith.

In fact, behind the various forms of religious thought lay the great problem, What is the method whereby religious truth is to be ordinarily acquired? Hitherto he had relied, theoretically at least, exclusively on reason. But in his own experience the method was not successful. He could not be blind to his exceptional ability. But what was the result? Some twelve years had already elapsed since his intellectual wanderings began. The whole period—no inconsiderable element in the life of a man—had been nothing else than a process of vacillation and transition from one religious theory to another. There was no settled conviction, and therefore there was no rest. What wonder that he afterwards spent much reflection on the question whether blessedness consists in the possession of truth or only in the search for it? The problem could not be any longer escaped whether, after all, religious truth is not to be acquired, at any rate in the first instance, by faith in authority.

A profusion of passages in his early writings belonging to the period immediately after his conversion show how incessantly this problem of the place of authority in religion haunted Augustine's mind. It may not, of course, be assumed that his whole subsequent theories on authority were already systematized in the great African's mind. But the main idea was undoubtedly firmly grasped. He came to realize how dependent all men are upon authority for their knowledge of the past, and for their knowledge of everything which surpassed their logic or transcended their experience. He saw that human progress lay in man's capacity to inherit the experience of previous generations, and to begin by assent to what others have acquired. He saw, further, that the mutual

relations of human beings are simply based on faith. The inference was natural that if faith in authority is essential to the acquisition of knowledge in the natural sphere, much more must it be essential in the sphere of the supernatural. It is plain that this inference grew upon Augustine with increasing power until it became positively irresistible.

When the principle of authority in religion is once accepted, the problem narrows down to the question, Who or what is the authority, and where is it to be found? Augustine was perfectly clear that there could be no room for doubt what the answer to that question must be. The supreme authority in religion is Jesus Christ. The reason for accepting that authority is because there is no greater. Augustine's faith in Jesus Christ as the supreme authority in religion did not at this period of his development in the least imply on Augustine's part any theological conceptions about our Lord's personality. It is true that Augustine's escape from the Manichæan identification of moral evil with material substance rendered the theory of Incarnation conceivable. But it is clear that his acceptance of our Lord's authority was at this stage independent of any belief in His Divinity. He did not at this time know that our Lord's personality was essentially different from that of all other men. The authority of Jesus Christ for Augustine consisted at this period in His teaching and His character. That is as far as the African hitherto understood. Without going into Christological problems, or raising the question of Incarnation, Jesus Christ was in any case the supreme authority in religion which the world possessed, and as such for the time being Augustine was now prepared to make Him the object of faith.

This acceptance of Jesus Christ as the supreme authority in religion was, of course, in its implications very far-

reaching, although it by no means follows that those implications were fully grasped at the critical time when Augustine first reached this momentous decision.

The mere recognition of authority removed Augustine from the mere intellectualism of philosophy. Authority and its correlative, faith, had no place among the principles of Neoplatonism.

Yet while Augustine now acknowledged the claims of authority in religion, he by no means represents authority as the opposite to reason. Faith in authority was itself based on reason. Reason is exerted in deciding which among the authorities is to be received. No assent to authority could be justified if such assent were reasonless. Thus faith and argument, authority and reason, are never entirely separate. Nor did Augustine ever regard acceptance of religious doctrines on authority as the final or ideal state. He aspired to verify by reason what he originally accepted by faith. But he had become convinced that the individual man, owing to his limitations, must needs begin by accepting on authority religious doctrines which he had not been able to prove by reason.

It must further be remembered that in Augustine's case this change of attitude was, after all, a return to the religion of his youth. He did not when past the age of thirty encounter the name of Jesus Christ for the first time, nor approach Christianity after a childhood trained in the different religion. At least in one sense Christ was not for Augustine's manhood a new discovery. Never at any time, even in his remotest wanderings, had Christ and the Christian ideal become completely uprooted from his mind.

Moreover, there was daily beside him the argument presented by his saintly mother's life. She had neither his learning nor his intellectual power. Yet the fact was plain that in the absence of both she rose to heights

which he could not reach in religious insight, in devotion, in spirituality of character. Her simple faith in the experience and authority of the Church endowed her with a strength and a serenity which he, with all his reasoning, had not been able to acquire. Her life was an eloquent, if unconscious, witness to the value of authority, while his life was a forcible proof of the spiritual limitations of the intellectual. Monnica's religious strength of character was more than enough to confirm her son's belief in the place which authority can occupy in religion. During the whole long period of his intellectual wanderings his mother had steadily matured in spirituality. She revealed a clearness of insight and a sureness of judgment which her son was constrained to revere. It was undeniably beautiful. And it was the product of simple faith in the religion of authority. No doubt Monnica's ascendency over her son was great. But it was by no means the mere ascendency of devoted motherly affection and strength of character over a more pliant disposition. The consistent development of her religious capacities was in itself a powerful argument and an appeal to her son's intelligence. It could not fail to suggest that the normal way of spiritual growth was by faith in a religion of authority.

It is appropriate here to quote Harnack's striking words about authority in religion, words which harmonize largely with Augustine's thoughts at this period:—

> "There has never yet existed in the world a strong religious faith which has not appealed, at some *decisive* point or other, to an *external authority*. It is only in the colourless expositions of religious philosophers, or the polemical systems of Protestant theologians, that a faith is constructed which derives its certitude exclusively from its own inner impulses. . . .
>
> "Only academic speculation thinks that it can

eliminate external authority; life and history show that no faith is capable of convincing men or propagating itself, which does not include obedience to an external authority, or fails to be convinced of its absolute power. The only point is to determine the rightful authority, and to discover the just relation between external and internal authority. Were it otherwise, we should not be weak, helpless beings. We cannot think too highly of the nobility of human talents; but they are not lofty enough to enable men so to appropriate the sum of all the ideal elements which compose the inner life, that these simply grow with the growth of the soul, or become its product. Above all, the thought of God, the thought of the love of God, can never receive an irrefragable certainty without being supported by an external authority. It is not a false view of religion that the restless quest of the soul only ceases when there has dawned upon it an authority whose validity is independent of the degree of strength with which its justification is felt *within the breast.*" [1]

It would be unnatural to leave this subject without a closing reflection on the philosophic insight and intellectual brilliancy of the author. That a man of such extraordinary ability should advocate as strongly and earnestly as he does the place of authority in religion is in itself remarkable. That he, with all his astonishing genius, should be keenly aware of his own limitations, and should subject himself to the authority of Christ and the Church, is deeply impressive. The fact of his own intellectual ascendency and complete surrender to authority is even more arresting than his arguments.

[1] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, v. 82, 83.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONVERSION

INTELLECTUAL hindrances to conversion to Christianity were partly removed and partly in process of disappearance. It became increasingly obvious to Augustine himself that by this time the dominating hindrance was moral. He was in a state of enfeebled will and protracted vacillation. He acknowledged the superiority of the Christian ideals of conduct, but felt himself enslaved by habitual surrender to conduct of an inferior kind. He appreciated the ascendency of Ambrose and the force of his character, but regarded his asceticism as a burden too hard to endure.

Meanwhile, in the house at Milan, Augustine and his friends were eagerly engaged in arguing about the form of life which they should adopt. They were distracted between two incompatible ideals. They felt the fascination of philosophy. The ideal of a community devoted to the studious search for truth filled Augustine's imagination, and was shared by the group of his companions. Withdrawal from the distractions of the common occupations, a peaceful intellectual retreat, made upon them an appeal which was almost irresistible. No economic problems barred the way, for Romanian was extremely wealthy, and ardently favourable to the project.

The difficulty lay in a very different direction. Some of these young men were already married, and others had inclinations of a similar kind. With a swift descent from

the sublime to the ridiculous, it suddenly occurred to the meeting that the ladies might object. They had certainly not been consulted, and would probably have something to say.

Augustine himself was painfully and humiliatingly drawn in two directions. Father of an illegitimate son, the unmarried wife being at that very time in the house, dreaming of celibacy one hour and contemplating marriage in the next, eagerly arguing on the ideals of community life with his companions, then sending the unhappy, nameless, unmarried wife away, then seeking for a lawful marriage some two years hence, yet unable meanwhile to restrain his sexual cravings, nevertheless still haunted by the ideal of asceticism, he has drawn a most piteous picture of a divided self, a picture which indeed roused his own self-loathing and self-contempt.

Alypius was at this period an ardent advocate of celibacy, whereas Augustine was anxious to marry. Alypius did his utmost to avert his teacher from this course. Augustine took a practical, but not a lofty, point of view. He wanted to marry a woman with means in order to relieve himself from financial anxieties. Alypius opposed this plea, on the ground that marriage involved care and responsibilities which were incompatible with philosophic pursuits. Augustine retorted that many students of philosophy had been married men. Alypius could not understand what attraction Augustine found in the prospect. Monnica, however, supported Augustine's view, and busied herself to find a suitable bride for him.

Meanwhile the sordid and heartless side of pagan contemporary morals displayed itself. The mother of Augustine's son, Adeodatus, was sent away from Augustine and from her child. She returned to Africa, resolved thenceforth to lead a single life. From that date she

disappears, and is never mentioned again. What became of her is unknown. Her very name is unrecorded. No sign of sympathy with or pity for her is to be found even in the pages of the Confessions. It is to be feared that even in the Church popular opinion fell far beneath the ideal. Indeed, Augustine sank lower still. With the prospect of marriage before him within a year or two, he formed a second irregular, unhallowed connection. What judgment Monnica passed on this further repudiation of Christian ideals is not recorded. But it is clear that contemporary opinion was only too ready to excuse immoral relations between the unmarried.

If Augustine's moral irregularities are judged from the standpoint of Christian ideals, judged in this light there is, of course, nothing to be said but condemnation. With that judgment he himself entirely concurred after his conversion. No terms can well be severer, no condemnation more complete, than that which he has passed upon himself in his own Confessions. But it must always be remembered that at the time when these irregularities were contracted Augustine was not subject to the laws of the Church, but only to those of the Roman State. In the civil code of the Roman Empire the unmarried wife was not recognized. She had no rights or claims. The legally married man was forbidden to have in addition an unmarried wife. But if he had contracted no legal marriage he was at liberty to indulge in this irregular connection. Augustine therefore, when living with the unmarried woman at Carthage, was only doing what pagan morals and pagan legislation allowed. Relatively, therefore, to the public opinion of the Empire he was not degraded. Upon his submission to the authority of the Church all this was completely changed. A Regulation of the Synod of Toledo, held in the year A.D. 400 (Canon 17), is sometimes quoted to show that, at least in certain

localities, the Church itself legislated on the same lines as the Roman State. But the meaning of that particular regulation at Toledo is not clear, whereas the general ruling of the Church at large is clear.[1] Moreover, Augustine himself, years afterwards as a preacher, makes it unmistakably plain to the congregations in Africa what was the Christian ideal and the law of the Church upon the matter. He called the separate attention both of the faithful, and of the penitent, and of the candidates for baptism, to the Church's ruling, that it was absolutely unlawful for Christian men to keep an unmarried wife, or to entertain such a woman temporarily and to dismiss her in order that they might marry.[2]

Pope St. Leo maintained in one of his letters a sharp distinction between unhallowed sexual intercourse and such relations with the lawful wife. The former did not constitute marriage. Such a woman was not a wife. Reference was made to the Jewish direction—"Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free." It was held that an unmarried mother had no legal rights. She was not recognized. To separate from her and dismiss her, and to enter on lawful marriage, was not bigamy, but the beginning of an honourable life.[3]

It was clearly not mere intellectual discussion, nor appeal to the reasoning capacities, that Augustine chiefly required. It was appeal to the conscience, the heart and the will. And precisely at this critical stage of his development a series of moral examples, as well as of ideals of conduct, was presented before him.

Augustine now began to study St. Paul.[4] The Epistle to the Romans naturally appealed to the depths of the soul. Its penetrating analysis of the conflict between the

[1] See Leclerc. *Histoire des Conciles* (Hefele), Tome ii. P. i. p. 124.
[2] *Sermo.* 392. 2. [3] *Ep.*, clxvii. 4, 6. [4] Cf. *C. Acad.*, ii. 2, 5.

higher and lower self was exactly adapted to Augustine's needs, reflected his own experience, and revealed the remedy. He now came to see that Christianity supplied precisely what Platonism omitted. The sense of personal unworthiness, the consciousness of sin, which occupied so profound a place in Christianity, was absent from the speculations of the Neoplatonist. The philosopher's ethical code was high, and his moral enthusiasm great; but he had no message for the sin-stained and heavy-laden. Neoplatonism had no note of penitence, and no consolation for the conscience-stricken, for men sickened and humiliated by a sense of miserable weakness and failure to acquire dominion over self. It was undoubtedly for these reasons, above all for its inability to correspond with the facts of human experience, that Augustine could never finally rest in this philosophy, however sublime and however religious its spirit.

The great qualities of the Bishop of Milan, his personal character, his dominating will, his power as a teacher, his wide reputation, his extensive influence in imperial affairs and over the affections of the people, eclipsed his clergy altogether. Attention is so concentrated on the central figure of Ambrose that the reader of the Confessions is left through several books in complete ignorance whether there were any other clergy at all in the Church at Milan. At last it emerges that at any rate there was one priest beside the Bishop. There was the priest Simplicianus.

Simplicianus had been a father to Ambrose in the Christian life, was now his subordinate, and became his successor. Simplicianus was a man of eager and inquiring mind. "For the sake of the faith," says Ambrose, "Simplicianus had traversed the world; night and day he devoted his whole life to constant study." [1] He was

[1] St. Ambrose, *Ep.*, lxvi.

thoroughly familiar with philosophic thought, and keenly aware of its limitations. But he was far more than a studious priest. He was evidently a genuine saint.

To him Augustine turned. Very appropriately, among the letters of Ambrose to Simplicianus is one on the difficulty and the blessedness of a true repentance.[1] Certainly nothing could be more expressive of Augustine's need.

Simplicianus ably supplemented the labours of his overburdened chief, and was more accessible than his superior to Augustine's individual needs.

> "Thou didst put it into my mind, and it seemed good in mine eyes, to go to Simplicianus, who appeared to me a faithful servant of Thine, and Thy grace shone in him. I had also heard that from his very youth he had lived most devoted to Thee. Now he had grown into years, and by reason of so great age, passed in such zealous following of Thy ways, he appeared to me likely to have gained much experience; and so in truth he had. Out of which experience I desired him to tell me, setting before him my griefs, which would be the most fitting way for one afflicted as I was to walk in Thy way." [2]

Augustine informed Simplicianus about his Neoplatonic studies in treatises translated by Victorinus, formerly Professor of Rhetoric at Rome.[3] The priest congratulated him on the direction which his studies had taken. Evidently Simplicianus regarded Neoplatonism as a pathway towards the Christian faith. He told Augustine that Victorinus, the translator of these philosophic writings, had himself become a convert to the Church. His reputation in Rome was remarkable. But he was a

[1] *Ep.*, lxvii. [2] *Conf.*, viii. 1.
[3] Cf. St. Jerome, *De Viris illustr.*, 101.

pagan, and an ardent advocate of the pagan worship, until he came to study this Greek philosophy. The Platonist theories wrought a wonderful change in his convictions. He then studied the Christian Scriptures, and was persuaded of the truth of their central principles. Eventually he paid a visit to Simplicianus, and informed him confidentially that he was a Christian. Like Nicodemus, however, he came secretly. The priest replied that he would not believe in the reality of this conversion until he saw Victorinus within the Church of Christ. The professor retorted by inquiring whether walls make Christians. This dispute was on several occasions repeated. What held him back from incorporation into the social community was fear of the pagan party in Rome. But he came at length to be influenced by another fear: lest Christ should deny before the Angels one who refused to confess Him before men. Quite unexpectedly, he said to Simplicianus: "Let us go to the Church; I wish to be made a Christian." [1] Simplicianus gave Augustine a most graphic account of Victorinus' public recital of the Christian Creed in the Church in Rome before throngs of believers. "There ran a low murmur through the mouths of the rejoicing multitude: Victorinus: Victorinus!" Sudden was the burst of exultation at the sight of him; and suddenly were they hushed that they might hear him. He pronounced the true faith with an excellent boldness, and all desired to take him to their heart.

Simplicianus also told Augustine that a certain Platonist declared [2] that the opening words of the Gospel of St. John ought to be written in letters of gold, and set up in all churches in the most prominent position.

This story of the conversion of Victorinus made a great impression on Augustine. The translator of these Platon-

[1] *Conf.*, viii. 4. [2] *De Civ. Dei*, x. 29.

ist writings had been converted through his labours over them. Victorinus was Augustine's fellow-countryman. There was further the impressive fact that this conversion from paganism through Neoplatonism into Christianity had occurred in one of the most intellectual and learned men of his time. Augustine, moreover, heard from Simplicianus that Victorinus' sincerity in conversion had been put to a further test. For when the Emperor Julian enacted a statute by which all teaching of literature and rhetoric by Christians was prohibited, Victorinus abandoned his scholastic profession and devoted himself entirely to his creed.[1] How profoundly he studied the Christian faith is shown by his commentaries, which still remain, on the Ephesians and other Epistles of St. Paul. The later years of this eminent man were passed in obscurity and devotion. He seems to have lost his popularity, and in his old age to have been neglected by the world. But his memory became an inspiration to Augustine.

Yet there was another side to this. While a certain section of these Neoplatonist thinkers looked favourably on Christian ideas, and were attracted towards the faith, this was by no means the case with them all. Plotinus himself was apparently content to ignore it. Very different was the attitude of Porphyry. Augustine read the writings of this philosopher, and calls him the most learned among them, but also the bitterest opponent of Christianity.[2] As an illustration of this philosopher's attitude towards the Catholic religion, Augustine relates that Porphyry told the following story. A man inquired of the oracle what Deity he must appease in order to recover his wife from the Christian faith. The oracle replied: "You will probably find it easier to write lasting letters on the waters, or fly lightly like a bird through the air, than to restore right feeling in your

[1] *Conf.*, viii. 10. [2] *De Civ. Dei*, xix. 22.

impious wife after she has polluted herself. Let her remain as she pleases in her foolish delusion, and sing her false laments to her dead god who was condemned by right minded judges, and perished ignominiously by a violent death." [1]

The fierceness and anger of the oracle's reply, the evident readiness of the philosopher to endorse it, show at once the fascination of the faith and the violence of the Neoplatonist's reaction. But the story of Victorinus had more effect on Augustine than Porphyry's contempt.

Augustine by this time knew that the real obstruction between him and Christ was not intellectual, but moral. His will was enslaved. Evil action indulged had passed into habit, and habit not resisted had become necessity. The animal and the spiritual were not only at strife within him, but the lower ruled the higher. He understood only too well what is meant by the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. He was doubly afraid: afraid to continue as he was, and yet afraid to be set free. If a heavenly Voice was calling: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light"; he, although convicted of the truth, gave half-reluctant answer, "Bye and bye, not yet; leave me a little while." But the little while had already lengthened into years. In his miserable state he appropriated the Scripture cry, but without the Scripture solution: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" [2]

Meanwhile, as much as he was able, he attended the church. He kept constantly in companionship with Alypius and Nebridius. The latter, at Augustine's request, was helping one of the chief citizens of Milan, the grammarian Verecundus, who repaid this friendly

[1] *De Civ. Dei*, xix. 23. [2] *Conf.*, viii. 10.

act by providing Augustine and his companions with a home in his villa on the hills outside the city.[1]

On one occasion, when Nebridius was away, the African officer, Pontitian, paid Augustine a visit. The visitor took up a book lying on Augustine's table, and found, to his surprise, that it was a copy of the Epistles of St. Paul. The officer warmly congratulated him. He was a devout believer, and spent much time in the devotions of the Church. From Pontitian Augustine heard for the first time the story of St. Antony, the Egyptian monk. The officer confessed that the story had made a profound impression upon himself when serving in the army at Treves, and had totally altered his life. Augustine was moved. And when Pontitian went on to tell him of the existence of a monastery outside Milan, under the special supervision of Ambrose, he was moved still more. While the ideal of a community life had floated before his mind, and had been the subject of a futile debate with his companions, here was the actual realization of his dreams, the concrete fact of such a life in close proximity to his own wretched struggles, inconsistencies and failures. That was impressive.[2]

It was now twelve years since the reading of Cicero's Hortensius had roused the young man's enthusiastic desire for knowledge of truth. Yet here he was still fluctuating between the flesh and the spirit, so that virtually his prayer was to postpone all moral change: as he put it in celebrated words, "Give me chastity, but not yet."[3]

Then came at last the great memorable, inimitable scene in the garden, which no one can venture to recall except in the author's own words.[4]

"Thus was I sick and tormented, reproaching my-

[1] *Conf.*, viii. 13.
[2] *Conf.*, viii. 15.
[3] *Conf.*, viii. 17.
[4] *Conf.*, viii. 25.

self more bitterly than ever, rolling and writhing in my chain till it should be wholly broken, for at present, though all but snapped, it still held me fast. And Thou, O Lord, wast urgent in my inmost heart, plying with austere mercy the scourges of fear and shame, lest I should fail once more, and the remnant of my worn and slender fetter, instead of breaking, should grow strong again, and bind me harder than ever. For I kept saying within myself, 'O let it be now, let it be now'; and as I spoke the word I was on the verge of resolution. I was on the point of action, yet acted not; still I did not slip back into my former indifference, but stood close and took fresh breath. I tried again, and came a little nearer and a little nearer, I could all but touch and reach the goal, yet I did not quite reach or touch it, because I still shrank from dying unto death and living unto life, and the worse, which was ingrained, was stronger in me than the better, which was untrained. And the moment which was to make me different, affrighted me more the nearer it drew, but it no longer repelled or daunted, it only chilled me.

"Trifles of trifles and vanities of vanities, my old mistresses, held me back; they caught hold of the garment of my flesh and whispered in my ear, 'Can you let us go? and from that instant we shall see you no more for ever; and from that instant this and that will be forbidden you for ever.' What did they mean, O my God, what did they mean by 'this and that'? O let Thy mercy guard the soul of Thy servant from the vileness, the shame that they meant! As I heard them, they seemed to have shrunk to half their former size. No longer did they meet me face to face with open contradiction, but muttered behind

my back, and, when I moved away, plucked stealthily at my coat to make me look back. Yet, such was my indecision, that they prevented me from breaking loose, and shaking myself free, and running after the voice that called me away; for strong habit supported them, asking me, 'Do you think you can live without them?'

"But the voice of Habit had lost its persuasion. For in that quarter to which I had set my face and was fain to fly, there dawned upon me the chaste dignity of Continence, calm and cheerful but not wanton, modestly alluring me to come and doubt not, holding out to welcome and embrace me her pious hands full of good examples. There might I see boys and girls, a goodly array of youth and of every age, grave widows and aged virgins, and in every one of them all was Continence herself, not barren, but a fruitful mother of children, of joys born of Thee, her husband, O Lord. And she smiled upon me with a challenging smile, as if she would say, 'Canst not thou do what these have done? Was it their power, was it not that of the Lord their God, that gave them strength? The Lord their God gave me unto them. Thou standest on thyself, and therefore standest not. Cast thyself on Him; fear not; He will not flinch, and thou wilt not fall. Cast thyself boldly upon Him; He will sustain thee, and heal thee.' And I blushed, for still I heard the whispers of the daughters of vanity, and still I hung in the wind. And again she seemed to say, 'Stop thine ears against thy unclean members upon earth, that they may be mortified. They tell thee of delights, but not according to the law of the Lord thy God.' Such was the debate that raged in my heart, myself battling against myself. Alypius kept

close to my side and waited in silence to see the issue of my strange agitation.

"Now, when deep reflection brought forth from its secret stores the whole cloud of my misery, and piled it up in the sight of my heart, there rose a whirlwind, carrying with it a violent burst of tears. And hereupon I rose and left Alypius, till my weeping and crying should be spent. For solitude seemed fitter for tears. So I went farther off, till I could feel that even his presence was no restraint upon me. Thus it was with me, and he guessed my feelings. I suppose I had said something before I started up; and he noticed that my voice was fraught with tears. So he remained upon the bench lost in wonder. I flung myself down under a fig tree, and gave my tears free course, and the floods of mine eyes broke forth, an acceptable sacrifice in Thy sight. And I cried unto Thee incessantly, not in these words, but to this purpose, 'And Thou, O Lord, how long? How long, O Lord; wilt Thou be angry for ever? O remember not our iniquities of old times.' For I felt that I was held fast by them, and I went on wailing, 'How long, how long? to-morrow and to-morrow? Why not now? why not this hour make an end of my vileness?'

"Thus I spoke, weeping in bitter contrition of heart, when, lo, I heard a voice from the neighbouring house. It seemed as if some boy or girl, I knew not which, was repeating in a kind of chant the words, 'Take and read, take and read.' Immediately, with changed countenance, I began to think intently whether there was any kind of game in which children sang those words; but I could not recollect that I had ever heard them. I stemmed the rush of tears, and rose to my feet; for I could

not think but that it was a divine command to open the Bible and read the first passage I lighted upon. For I had heard that Antony had happened to enter a church at the moment when this verse of the Gospel was being read: 'Go, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow Me,' that he had taken these words home to himself, and by this oracle been converted to Thee on the spot.

"I ran back then to the place where Alypius was sitting; for, when I quitted him, I had left the volume of the Apostle lying there. I caught it up, opened it, and read in silence the passage on which my eyes first fell, 'Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.' No further would I read, nor was it necessary. As I reached the end of the sentence, the light of peace seemed to be shed upon my heart, and every shadow of doubt melted away. I put my finger, or some other mark, between the leaves, closed the volume, and with calm countenance told Alypius. And then he revealed to me his own feelings, which were unknown to me. He asked to see what I had read. I shewed him the text, and he read a little further than I had done, for I knew not what followed. What followed was this: 'Him that is weak in the faith receive.' This he explained to me as applying to himself. These words of warning gave him strength, and with good purpose and resolve, following the bent of his moral character, which had always been much better than mine, without any painful hesitation, he cast in his lot with me. Immediately we went in to my mother, and

to her great joy told her what had happened. But when we explained to her how it had come to pass, she was filled with exultation and triumph, and blessed Thee, who art able to do above that we ask or think. For she saw that Thou hadst granted her far more than she had ever asked for me in all her tearful lamentations."

CHAPTER VIII

AUGUSTINE IN RETREAT

THE great crisis in Augustine's conversion was now over. A vital change, lasting for life, had taken place. But to stop here, as if everything were finished, would show a complete misunderstanding of its nature. Conversion is a process which may have crises, but cannot be restricted to them. There was in Augustine's case much that went before the experience in the garden, and there was also much that followed after it. But both the before and the afterwards form part of the process of the change. If therefore Augustine's conversion is to be fully appreciated, the entire process must be followed out. It was principally a religious and a moral change which had taken place in the garden at Milan: moral because it involved a break with his own unworthy past; religious because it involved a different relation toward God. And this moral and mystical quality of the change could not be more fitly expressed than in Augustine's own words of thanksgiving: "Thou hast broken my bonds asunder, I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of praise." [1]

There is no question that Augustine left the garden an altered man. But he also left it with a very imperfect grasp of the Catholic faith. In theological apprehension he had still far to go. He had to co-ordinate this spiritual experience with his intellectual problems and general outlook upon life. He had to realize the immense extent

[1] *Conf.*, ix. 1.

to which his religious experience modified his philosophical ideas. At the time of his conversion he was still theoretically a Neoplatonist philosopher, but yet combining therewith a very definite Theism, a belief in a personal Deity, a consciousness of sin, and a penitent spirit, which belonged to his early Christian training rather than to the Pantheistic outlook of the philosophy which he had accepted.[1] Thus the implications of his religious experience, as they grew to be intelligently realized, led him more and more in the direction of the Christian Creed.

The strain of the long conflict told on body and mind. Augustine's whole nature demanded rest. He determined to resign his professorship at the earliest opportunity.[2] Some twenty days and the term would end (August 386). When these were past he could quietly withdraw, without parading the real cause of his withdrawal. For three weeks, therefore, he continued his work as usual, and then resigned, partially explaining the real motive only to the inner circle of friends.

Augustine did not tell everybody the whole reason why he resigned his professorship at Milan. He did not even tell the full reason to all his friends. He contented himself with ascribing it to ill health: which, indeed, was the external cause which required him to resign. But he said nothing even in his letters to intimate friends about the scene in the garden at Milan, nor does he allude to it anywhere. Some critics have thought this reserve and silence strange. But surely it was natural—natural at any rate to one of Augustine's disposition. It was exactly the way he acted before when he left Africa without informing his patron Romanian, and concealing his intention from his mother. There was a decidedly secretive element in Augustine's character.

His progress toward the faith had been watched with

[1] Cf. R. Seeberg, *op. cit.*, p. 307. [2] *Conf.*, ix. 2.

tender solicitude by many in Milan: by none more tenderly than by Verecundus, a student and citizen of that city. Verecundus, although not yet a believer, had a Christian wife. He greatly sympathized with Augustine's conversion, and placed his country house at Cassiciacum, near Milan, at the convert's disposal.

> "Said Verecundus, 'Thou art ill at ease.
> My farm lies north from here but a few leagues;
> Fair is its meadow-land, fair its chestnut trees.
> Go rest thee well from thy thoughts' long fatigues,
> Thou and thy dearest.' So Augustine went
> On holiday to that green banishment." [1]

The offer was gratefully accepted. Here, then, from the autumn of 386 to Lent in the following year, Augustine lived in quiet.

Other occupants of the house beside himself were Monnica his mother, his brother Navigius, his son Adeodatus, his two pupils, Trygetius and Licentius, together with Alypius, Lastidian and Rusticus. Licentius had taken to writing poetry. Trygetius was a soldier and a lover of history. The time was spent in instructing his pupils, in conference and discussions on problems of religious life, and in reflection and devotion.[2] Augustine wrote to Ambrose asking what books it would be well for him to read. Ambrose recommended the prophecies of Isaiah;[3] doubtless as likely to guide the convert's thoughts to the person of Christ, and as conspicuously predicting the conversion of the Gentile world. Augustine, however, found that he could not understand the opening chapters; and, imagining the remainder to be similar, laid the book aside, intending to resume it later when more familiar with our Lord's own teaching. In the place of Isaiah, Augustine substituted the Psalms. Here Augustine found

[1] "St. Augustine's Holiday," by W. Alexander (Archbishop of Armagh).

[2] *De Ordine*, 1–5.

[3] *Conf.*, ix. 13.

the deepest emotions of his soul anticipated and marvellously expressed. Here were the lowest depths of humiliation attained, and also the highest heights of praise. The Psalmist had penetrated into all the varying conditions of the spiritual life.

The villa of Verecundus was the scene of eager discussions upon great speculative and religious questions. The little community would gather at the close of the day's work, after study and letter-writing, sometimes within the villa itself, in its court or bath, sometimes in the open air of the country surrounding them, to hold their conference.[1] One of their number, acting as secretary, on each occasion recorded the substance, if not the actual words, of their conversations: Augustine's weak health rendering the effort of writing laborious and painful.

These discussions, which Augustine afterwards published, enable us to realize how he escaped from the scepticism which he learnt from Cicero's treatise. He began by awakening in his young men an interest in speculative thought. And for this purpose he read with them Cicero's Hortensius, which had created so deep an impression upon himself when he read it twelve years previously. The book produced much the same effect on his pupils. It roused in them an inquiring spirit. They began to argue furiously.

Perhaps the most attractive of these discussions was that concerning a happy life.[2] It occupied three days, and was begun on Augustine's birthday (November 13th, 386). Augustine's birthday was kept as a feast of reason, but otherwise very frugally. Augustine started them with the question whether it was true that every man longs after happiness. They all agreed that it was. Next he asked them whether they thought that any one could be called happy who does not possess what he desires to

[1] *Soliloq.*, i. 16. [2] *De beata Vita.*

have. They all agreed that he could not. Then, asked Augustine, does happiness consist in the possession of what we desire? Monnica replied, "If he desires and possesses what is good, he is happy. But if he desires evil, he is unhappy, in spite of its possession." Augustine heartily agreed. His mother had indicated the truest outlook upon life. He went on to say that this was exactly what Cicero had written in his book, the Hortensius, which Augustine had been reading with his pupils only a few days before. "Philosophers and controversialists," wrote Cicero, "agree that happiness consists in living as one desires." "But this," added Cicero, "is not true. For to desire what is unbecoming is the most unhappy condition. Nor is it so unhappy to fail in obtaining your desire as to obtain what you ought not to desire. Perversity of desire brings greater evil than possession can bring good." That quotation Monnica warmly approved. Accordingly, they all agreed that no one was happy who did not possess what he desires, nor every one whose desires were satisfied.

In what, then, does happiness consist? Can he who fears be described as happy? It was agreed that he cannot. The possessions of this life are all liable to be lost. Therefore their possession, being always insecure, is inseparable from fear. Consequently, their possession cannot insure happiness. Nor, indeed, added Monnica, even if they could not be lost. A man cannot be satisfied by them, for he is always wanting something more. "But suppose he were satisfied with these possessions, is he to be called happy?" asks Augustine. "Not in their possession, but in the moderation of his own mind," replied Trygetius. "Then happiness must consist in the possession of that which abides, that which no change of fortune can deprive us of. What, then, is that which abides and is eternal? It is God. The conclusion therefore is that he who has God is happy."

"Then," said Augustine, "the question is, What sort of person is it who possesses God?" Licentius replied, "He has God who lives aright"; Trygetius, "He has God who does God's will"; Adeodatus, "He has God who has no unclean spirit." Monnica approved all three answers, but especially the last.

Augustine here reminded them of a subject which they had previously begun to argue, but had laid aside in favour of this present argument on happiness. That previous subject was the philosophy of the sceptics. Here are men who profess themselves to be seekers for truth. They do not possess it, else they would not search. They desire to possess what they have not found. Plainly, therefore, they have not attained to Happiness. Happiness consists not in the search, but in the possession.

Monnica was not familiar with the theories of the sceptical philosophers. She asked her son to explain what these thinkers held. He did so. Monnica's comment was "Those men are weak-minded." And with that remark she got up and went out. Everybody laughed, and argument ended for the day.

On the following day Augustine said that the materials for a conclusion were already provided. Monnica held, and they all agreed with her, that unhappiness consists in want. Happiness, therefore, concluded Augustine, consists in possession. To be without wisdom is the greatest want. And to be in possession of wisdom is to want nothing. He then went on to consider the two contraries of fulness and want, regarding wisdom as a sort of balanced state of mind between excess and defect.

And here Augustine raised the religious issue. What else is wisdom than the wisdom which is of God? Now, according to the divine authority, by which Augustine means the Christian revelation, the Son of God is the wisdom of God, and the Son of God is God.

And further than that. If we ask what is it in which

wisdom consists, the answer is, Wisdom consists in truth. Does not God say, I am the Truth? Now truth is the product of the Supreme Harmony, from which it proceeds, and towards which it returns. The Supreme Harmony has no superior. It is self-existent. Truth never existed without harmony, nor was harmony ever without truth. Who is the Son of God? The answer is, Truth. Who is He who never had a father? It is the Supreme Harmony. Accordingly, blessedness consists in reaching the Supreme Harmony by means of truth.

God, therefore, is to be sought with every effort in man's power. He is the fountain whence truth descends to us. He pours this light upon our inner vision. So long as we are merely seekers after truth, we have not attained to harmony. And therefore, although God is already helping us, we have not attained to wisdom nor to blessednesss. Complete satisfaction of the soul, and therefore blessedness, consists in three things: perfectly to know by whom you are led into truth, what the truth is which you enjoy, and how you are brought into union with the Supreme Harmony. These three reveal one God.

When Monnica heard Augustine utter these last thoughts she instantly added what her son had not said, but what she understood him to imply. She repeated the lines of one of Bishop Ambrose's hymns addressed to the Holy Trinity:

> "Pray we the Father and the Son
> And Holy Ghost: O Three in One,
> Blest Trinity, whom all obey,
> Guard Thou Thy sheep by night and day."

Then she added that this was beyond all doubt the happy life, the perfect life toward which they might assuredly advance in faith and hope and love.

This dialogue on the secret of happiness is a significant

indication of Augustine's intellectual state. It is a conflict of many theories from various schools. His opening definition of a happy life, as being nothing else than living in accordance with that which is best in man, the best in man being his reason, is a definition which Augustine found in Cicero. It could not satisfy him on reflection as a Christian. When he passed his earlier writings in review at the close of his career he took serious exception to this definition which in his uninstructed period he had accepted. He saw that the secret of happiness is not to be found in man, or in living according to that which is noblest in human nature. For that definition ignored a Deity. Reflection led him to substitute a more religious definition. The ideal for human beings cannot consist in living " secundum hominem," but " secundum Deum."

Augustine's maturer judgment was evidently dissatisfied with this earlier production in many ways. He writes that it was never completed, and that it fails through various omissions. In the earlier part of the Dialogue he affirms that happiness consists in possessing God. As the discussion proceeds he represents Wisdom as being nothing else than a balanced state of mind, a condition of proportion between excess and defect; which is, to say the least, a very different idea from the possession of Deity. Then, later still, Wisdom indeed is called the Wisdom of God, but Augustine's reflections on the Supreme Harmony and Wisdom and Truth belong to the Neoplatonist philosophy rather than to the Creed of the Church. And when he goes on to adopt a Trinitarian expression, and speaks of three as constituting one God and one subsistence, and says that according to the divine authority (meaning thereby the Christian revelation) the Son of God is identified with the Wisdom of God, and indeed the Son of God is actually God, his language resembles the Christian, but the resemblance is rather in

words than in ideas. His language stirs his mother's faith, and Monnica recites the Trinitarian doctrine in Bishop Ambrose's hymn. But it is impossible to evade the fact that Monnica and Augustine are not really yet united in the faith. She is the Catholic, he is still the Neoplatonist. He is already paying deference to the divine authority of the Church. His intention is to accept its faith. But he has yet far to go before his philosophic theories are brought into unity with the faith of Christendom. At present he is the Neoplatonist thinker with an implicit assent to the Church's conception of God. But he has not yet thought out the Church's principles. Monnica's faith in the Holy Trinity represented the Catholic tradition. She had lived in the atmosphere of the Church as her son had not. The language of Catholic devotion was natural to her.

Augustine was evidently moved by his mother's recital of Ambrose's hymn to the Holy Trinity. He closed with a thanksgiving to God the Father, the Lord and Deliverer of Souls.

Augustine sent a copy of this discussion on the happy life to the Christian Platonist, Manlius Theodorus, dwelling on the difficulties which attend the intellectual and religious progress of man. He gives Theodorus a sketch of his own chequered career; how Cicero's Hortensius kindled in him a passion for philosophy in his nineteenth year; how a youthful superstition frightened him off from research; how he yielded to the attractions of a religion which promised him demonstrations instead of requiring faith; how he reacted from these fallacies and drifted toward total unbelief. Then he gathered partly from the teaching of Ambrose, and partly from conversations with Theodorus himself, that neither philosophy nor Christianity maintained a materialist conception of Deity. He tells Theodorus that he was detained from

the study of philosophy partly by ambition for worldly honours and partly by sexual attractions. In this bewildering condition of mind he encountered some Platonist writings of which he was aware Theodorus himself was a student. Then, further, he compared these philosophic writings with the authorities of religion and the sacred books of Christianity. Then he fell ill. He does not tell Theodorus anything about the story of his conversion, adding only that he resigned his profession and retired into studious tranquillity.

Here, then, he is in comparative security. He is, so to say, in harbour, but by no means free from risk of error. He hardly knew where the settlement would be. Accordingly, he appeals to Theodorus to help him. Theodorus already knows by experience the happy life. Augustine meanwhile sends Theodorus his own reflections on this momentous theme.

CHAPTER IX

A DISCUSSION ON DOUBT

A FEW days after this conference Augustine called his friends together to discuss the theory of universal doubt.

Licentius then asked Augustine to give a summary of the Academic theory. Augustine replied that the fundamental doctrine of this sceptical philosophy was, that certainty was not within the reach of the human mind. The consequence of this theory was, Augustine informed his pupils, that, in the opinion of the Academics, a wise man would give assent to nothing. For to assent to the uncertain and unproved was inconsistent with wisdom. Augustine further pointed out that this proposition and this conclusion seemed to paralyze human action, because he who approves nothing can do nothing. Inability to give assent to a principle as true logically reduced a man to utter inactivity. Hence the opponents of this school charged its advocates with maintaining that the truly wise man was the sleeper and the deserter of duty. To this accusation the sceptical school replied that if there was no such thing as certainty, yet there was such a thing as probability, and probability was resemblance to truth. Consequently, the Academic philosopher was no deserter of duty, for he followed the line of probability.

Augustine now called on Licentius to see what he could say in defence of doubt. Did the Academic theory please him?

Licentius answered, "Yes, very much."

"Then," asked Augustine, "do you think it true?"

Licentius was going to answer, but saw Alypius smile. That made him cautious. So he asked Augustine to repeat the question.

Augustine did so.

Licentius replied, "Whether it is true I do not know. But I think it probable."

Augustine inquired whether Licentius realized that these philosophers held that probability means resembling truth.

Licentius assented.

Augustine continued: "But what would you think of a man who said, 'How like Licentius is to his father Romanian,' when Romanian was a person whom he had never seen?"

Licentius declined to admit that this would be absurd.

After some disputing, Augustine restated the case. "Suppose a visitor arrives and says, 'Whose son is this?' And the answer is given, 'This is a son of a certain Romanian.' Whereupon the visitor exclaims, 'How like he is to his father!' But this same visitor, being asked, 'Then you know Romanian?' 'No,' he says, 'I never saw him; but his son appears to me closely to resemble him.' Could anybody avoid a smile? Well, then, you see what follows."

"I see," said Licentius, "but I would rather you made the application."

"The application," said Augustine, "is that these Sceptics, when they claim to follow what resembles truth, provoke a smile, since on their own assertion they do not know what truth is."

After some further talk, Augustine remarked that this subject was no mere light-hearted display of logical fencing. It determined a man's whole outloook upon life. The theory that truth was beyond the reach of

mortal man to discover had profoundly affected himself. He felt the paralyzing effect of a theory which asserted that the ablest of mankind were baffled in a hopeless search. For unless man has hope in the possibility of attaining truth, it was not reasonable to spend time in an inquiry which he was persuaded must be fruitless. In spite of everything that a sceptical philosophy had said, we must discuss as best we can among ourselves whether truth can be ascertained. As far as he himself was concerned, Augustine declared that there were many things to be said against the sceptical view.

And here, after some words from Alypius, they stopped for the day.[1]

Their discussion was resumed another day in the baths attached to the house. Augustine began by deploring the amount of time spent in providing for household needs. It vexed him to remember that on the previous day only two hours could be devoted to studious thought. This inability to be independent of mundane considerations, and wholly absorbed in intellectual inquiry, led him to ask whether private means are not essential to a man who would be wise.

Criticizing the Academic scepticism, Augustine said that these philosophers held that truth cannot be discovered. He held that it is discoverable. He does not say that he has yet discovered it. But holds that its discovery is within a wise man's power.

Alypius, on his side, admitted that divine help is indispensable for this discovery.

Augustine rejoiced in this admission. That his most intimate friend agreed with him about religion was a ground for thankfulness. For the truest account of friendship is kindly and sympathetic agreement in things human and divine.

[1] *C. Academ.* Bk. iii.

And here Augustine began his criticisms. He acknowledged that the Academic arguments had greatly weighed with him, especially as set in array by Cicero. Now the two main Academic propositions are these. First, that nothing can be known for certain. "What!" asked Augustine, "will you say that you do not know whether you are a man or an ant? Will you say that you know nothing in the physical sphere? Surely you know that the world is either one or not one; that numbers are either finite or infinite; that the world is what it is either by the nature of bodies or by the disposition of providence; that the world either had a beginning or did not; etc. These disjunctive propositions are all of them true, and there is no possibility of being deceived about them. If you say that nothing can be known, prove that I do not know these, or that they have anything common with falsehood, or that they cannot possibly be known."

"Well," says the sceptical philosopher, "but what if your senses deceive you? How then do you know anything about the world?"

Augustine replied, "All that you can say is that the senses may convey wrong impressions. You cannot say that nothing whatever is perceived."

"What then about dreams?" asked the sceptical. "Is that world real which you see in visions?"

Augustine evidently felt this objection to be a difficulty. He contends that liability to deception by imagination or in dreams does not exclude the reality of things seen when we awake. And, in any case, the propositions previously mentioned remain true, whether we are awake or asleep.

"But do the senses convey what is true? What if any one says that he has no cause to complain of the representations which the senses bring? It would be unreasonable to expect of them more than they are

capable. Whatever the eyes see, they see true. Does any one object that a straight oar appears crooked in the water?"

"Well," answered Augustine, "the representation is true. If the oar in the water seemed straight, the eyes would be at fault. For they would not see what under the actual conditions they are bound to see. If the objector persists that if I consent to their representation I am deceived, the reply is, 'Consent no further than what appears, and there is no deception? I do not see," he added, "how the Academics can refute a person who says: 'I know that this appears to me to be white. I know that this delights my ears; that this is sweet to my taste; that this is cold.' If anybody retorts, 'Perhaps you don't experience any of these things; you only dream them.' Well, in that case, it is true that they please me in dreams. I have therefore got hold of a truth, after all. Moreover, there are schools of philosophy which contend strenuously for the validity of the senses." To that contention Augustine did not see how the Academics can reply. The sceptical philosophy is rejected by many philosophers.

Next consider the sphere of things moral. "Surely," argued Augustine, "it is true to say that the blessed life either does not exist, or else that it lies either in the body or in the mind, or in both. Convince me, if you can, that this proposition is not true. And if you cannot, as assuredly you cannot, my contention holds that it is possible for the philosopher to arrive at something which is true.

"But perhaps the philosopher is afraid that he may be determining what blessedness is while in reality he is asleep. He need not be afraid. He can repudiate his determination when he wakes up, if it displeases him.

"Then there is the sphere of things logical. If the sun

is one, it is not two. The same soul cannot be mortal and immortal. A man cannot be both blessed and miserable. It cannot be both night and day at the same time. Either that is a body which I see, or it is not," etc. " And what," asked Augustine, in a sentence which would have delighted Abélard, " if Dialectic is the science of Truth? "

The second main sceptical proposition was a conclusion derived from the first. It was that, since everything is uncertain, it is impossible to give assent to anything. That is what Cicero maintained in the Hortensius. Not only is the man in error who approves what is false, but so also is he who approves what is doubtful, even although what is doubtful be true. Consequently, they urge that a man should keep his judgment in suspense. Augustine acknowledged that this conclusion had greatly impressed him; and he had given it much thought. Can we refuse to keep our judgment in suspense? Can we justify an act of decision? Is it ideal to sit upon the fence? Is it true that wisdom lies in indecision? Augustine answered his own inquiries. Indecision is not safe. For it is not only the man who follows a wrong road that errs, but also he who does not follow the right one.

All this discussion was for Augustine intensely personal. It is autobiographical, and full of a sense of relief at his own deliverance. The conflicts of philosophers have led him to the conclusion that escape from uncertainty must always have been exceedingly precarious, unless the Supreme Deity, by an act of benevolent condescension, had brought the authority of the divine mind down to the level of a human body and its restrictions: so that men, not only by God's words, but also by His deeds, should be enabled to withdraw into themselves, and to realize their destiny even without philosophical disputations.

He ended with the reflection that he was now in his thirty-third year. And whatever the sceptical school might say, he was convinced that no one had the right to despair of discovering truth. He was determined to set aside all other interests which mortals can pursue, and to concentrate his whole attention upon this. Again, as so often before, he acknowledged that the theory of universal doubt had seriously disturbed him. But he was now fortified against their arguments. He had not now, although he thought very differently once, the smallest doubt that there are two avenues to ascertaining truth; and that these are authority and reason. And here he openly declared that the authority to which he had resolved to defer is Christ. The reason for this deference to Christ's authority is that he knew no greater. But he had no desire merely to acquiesce in truth by an act of faith in authority. He is eagerly desirous to win intellectual apprehension of that to which he assents. Meanwhile, the position at which he has arrived is this, that he thinks he can find among the Platonists principles not repugnant to those of the Christian sacred books.

After this profession of faith there was a pause. Augustine's pupils waited to see how Alypius would reply. To their disappointment, however, Alypius, as might be expected from the companion of Augustine's conversion, confessed his entire agreement with the conclusions reached.

This whole discussion is a self-revelation on Augustine's part. He here explains, with a completeness equalled nowhere else in all his writings, the process of his intellectual development out of scepticism. And the peculiar interest of it is that this is a record of his thoughts in the period before he was admitted into the Church. This record supplies what the Confessions omit, and is indispensable to a real knowledge of the great African's

progress. Of course a principal portion, perhaps the whole, of these searching criticisms on universal doubt belongs in reality to the days before Augustine was converted. He had already advanced in Neoplatonic ideas long before that scene in the garden at Milan. But it was all written down in the days before he had yet placed himself as a learner in the guidance of the Church.

The conversion of this great man, so far as it was intellectual, is sometimes accounted for as due to a mere craving for external authority. He has been called " the most illustrious representative in history of a process very familiar to our own age, by which men of considerable intellectual activity, wearied with the questionings and scepticisms which they cannot solve, fall back upon external authority as the only mode of silencing the reason and satisfying the conscience." [1]

But the remarkable passage previously quoted from this discussion on the Academic philosophy, where Augustine sees no escape from uncertainty unless the Supreme Deity in merciful condescension brought the authority of the divine mind down to the level of a human body, and by that restriction rendered Himself ascertainable and within our reach, shows clearly that the great thinker is not by any means taking refuge in a mere external authority, but in a direct self-revelation of Deity by the personal entrance of the divine within the historic life of man. Reliance on Incarnation is a very different thing from reliance on the merely external.

[1] Allen, *Continuity of Christian Thought* (1884), p. 3.

CHAPTER X

A DISCUSSION ON THE ORDER OF THE UNIVERSE

AFTER the discussion on sceptical philosophy was closed, Augustine entered upon another great problem. This is the problem of order in the universe: whether things can be accounted for as under any sort of providential control.[1] How reconcile the disorder which prevails in the world with divine regulation of human affairs? Reason seems driven either to say that earthly things are not under divine guidance, or else that they are ignored rather than ruled by Deity.

Augustine was certainly not living in a way likely to restore him to health. He spent the chief part of the day in teaching his two pupils, and then nearly half the night in his own solitary reflections. Anxious to gain fresh light on the problems which perplexed him, he grudged the time which his duties as a teacher prevented him from devoting to the study of philosophy and religion. Nor was he satisfied to instruct his pupils in literature. He was training them to think. He would seize the most trivial incident to introduce a discussion of great principles. One night, for example, as he lay awake, his attention was caught by an irregular ebb and flow of water in the channel from the bath. He could not understand the cause. Licentius was also awake, and was keeping off the mice by making a noise with a stick. Augustine asked Licentius if he could explain why the

[1] *De Ordine* (end of A.D. 386).

water flowed intermittently. Licentius replied that it was nothing new. He had heard it before. Thereupon Trygetius joined in. What could it be? asked Augustine: nobody could be washing at that time of night. They were all in the dark; for economy would not allow any illumination. Licentius explained that it was only a drift of autumn leaves which stopped the channel until washed away by the weight of water, when other leaves accumulated and the process was repeated.

"Well then," said Augustine, "there is nothing to surprise us."

"You have given me cause to be surprised," replied Licentius, "namely, that this thing surprised you."

Augustine saw his opportunity for discussion. "What, then," he asked, "is the cause of wonder or surprise? Is not wonder created by any unwonted occurrence beyond the known order of causes?"

"Yes," said Licentius, "I agree, so long as you lay stress on the epithet 'known.' For nothing happens beyond the order of causes."

Augustine was delighted with his pupil's perception of the distinction between the order of nature in itself and the order of nature so far as it is known to us. This is the distinction which the writer afterwards employed in his definition of a miracle.

"Tell me," asked Augustine, "why do you suppose that this water does not flow accidentally, but in the order of nature? Its flowing along these wooden channels, and being made subservient to our use, is certainly orderly; for it was wrought by men who have the use of reason. But that it should be stopped by leaves, is not that rather accidental, and the work of chance?"

Licentius replied that the leaves neither could nor ought to have fallen in any other way. Nothing can happen without a cause. "If you ask me to take into account

the position of the trees and their branches, the weight and form which nature has conferred upon the leaves, the air in which they floated down, the rate of their progression; these are matters which baffle us, but nothing can alter the fact that nothing happens without a cause. If the annoying inquirer ('odiosus percunctator') wants to know what causes produced the growth of the trees in that particular locality, the answer is still the same, nothing happens without a cause."

"Well," said Augustine, "although you call me an 'odiosus percunctator,' tell me, What is the use of trees which produce no fruit?"

Here Trygetius interposed. "The use of a tree is not limited to its producing fruit for man. Don't be led away by his questionings. For many things exist which are no use to men. Rather let him tell you how anything can exist without a cause."

At this Licentius jumped up excitedly. He suddenly caught a glimpse of order in everything. It was all a series of causes: the mouse that kept him awake; the sound that attracted Augustine's attention; the thoughts that entered his mind. For it is not in any man's power to determine what thoughts shall enter. If a wandering mouse was a nuisance to a sleeping man; if all this should be recorded and published to other people; final product of a flutter of leaves: what else does it all show but this—that nothing happens without a cause?

"You say," remarked Augustine, "that nothing happens without a cause. Tell me now whether this order of nature seems to you bad or good."

"It is neither," replied Licentius. "It occupies a middle place between good and evil."

"What, then, is the contrary to order?" asked Augustine.

"There is no contrary," said Licentius. "For how

can there be a contrary to that which occupies the whole, and universally prevails? That which is contrary to order would of necessity be beyond order. But there is nothing which is beyond the sphere of order."

"Then," inquired Trygetius, "is not error contrary to order?"

"Not in the least," replied Licentius. "For no man errs without a cause. The series of causes is included in the realm of order. Error is not only caused by something, but in its turn is the cause of something else. Accordingly, error is not outside the realm of order, and cannot be contrary to order."

Augustine was delighted with his pupil's acuteness, both for the young man's sake, and especially for his father Romanian.

"You are talking great nonsense, Licentius," said Trygetius: "and obviously what you say is contrary to the truth. It is not only contrary to truth, but positively profane. For what you say amounts to this: that evil is contained in the order of Nature; that this order comes from God, and is the object of His love. Hence the conclusion is that evil comes from God, and is the object of His love."

Augustine says he waited in suspense, wondering what answer Licentius would be able to give.

"God does not love evil," said Licentius; "if for no other reason, then because it is not within the realm of order that he should love evil. He loves order for the very reason that thereby He cannot love evil. And evil can be within the realm of order precisely because God does not love it. The order of evil consists in the very fact that God does not love it. So evil, which God loves not, is not beyond order which God loves. For the order of things consists in His loving good and not loving evil. So evil is the antithesis to good, and order is preserved."

Licentius challenged Trygetius to reply. But no answer came. So he went on to say that it could not be disputed that God is just. And His justice is displayed in requiting every man. But there could be no requiting if there were no difference in the quality of actions. And there could be no difference if every action was good. But the justice of God requites every man, good and bad alike, according to his deserving. Since therefore God is just, everything is included in the sphere of order. And Licentius ended by asking Augustine whether this was his opinion.

Augustine proposed to wait for daylight, which, he added, would soon be arriving, unless that were the moon which was throwing light upon the windows.

So presently they got up. Augustine spent a considerable time in prayer; not without shedding tears when he heard Licentius singing, "Turn us again, Thou God of hosts: show the light of Thy countenance and we shall be whole" (Ps. lxxx. 7).

Augustine was apparently the last to get up. They said prayers together, and as the weather was dull, decided to hold their discussion in the bathing-place, stopping to witness, with a good deal of interest, some chickens fighting on the way.

Then they wrote down the discussion of the previous night. But, in Augustine's weak health nothing much was done that day beyond reading half a book of Virgil.

Next day, however, the subject of order was taken up in earnest. Augustine asked for a definition of order. Licentius objected to being required to define. The request for a definition was like being drenched with icy water. However, under protest, Licentius ventured on the statement that order is that by which all things are wrought which God determines.[1]

[1] Ordo est per quem aguntur omnia quæ Deus constituit.

"Then," inquired Augustine, "is not God Himself ruled by the principle of order?"

"So it seems," replied Licentius.

"Then God is ruled?" said Trygetius.

"How can it be otherwise?" replied Licentius. "Christ is God, and God sent Christ to us by the principle of order. Now Christ is God, we cannot deny that God not only does all things, but is Himself governed by the principle of order."

"I do not know how I can assent to that," Trygetius answered. "For when we speak of God it is not Christ who occurs to our minds, but the Father."

"This is a fine doctrine you are propounding," said Licentius. "Are we to deny that the Son of God is God?"

Trygetius saw the danger he was in, but, being in an argumentative mood, made answer. Christ indeed is God, but properly speaking that name belongs to the Father."

Here Augustine intervened. "Restrain yourself," he said. "For the Son is not improperly called God."

Trygetius was ashamed, and asked that his statement should not be recorded. Licentius eagerly insisted that it should. This rivalry was deeply distressing to Augustine. He broke out with indignant reproaches, in which all the warmth of his temperament was displayed.

"Are you not disturbed by the mass of defects and the dark clouds of ignorance with which we are weighed down, yea, overwhelmed? Is this your earlier zeal, now turned to rebellion against God and the truth? Oh, that you might see, even with such dim eyes as mine, in what perils we lie, what deadly madness that laughter reveals! Oh, that you could see how swift, how instant, how much more prolonged would be your emotions when changed to tears! Unhappy ones, know you not in what

state you are? It is the common lot of all foolish and untaught minds to be sunk in the depths of ignorance, but not in one way only does wisdom stretch out her hand to help those that are sunk. Some there are, believe me, there are some, who are called to rise, some who sink down to the uttermost depths. Do not, I entreat you, double my agonies. Let my wounds suffice me, for whose healing, though I pray to God with tears almost daily, yet often I am convinced that I am not worthy that they should be healed as quickly as I would. I entreat you, do not this, if you have any love toward me, if you are bound to me by any bonds of friendship, if you know how dearly I love you, at how great a price I value you, how exceedingly I am tormented by my anxiety because of your behaviour, if I deserve not to be ignored by you, if, in a word, God is my witness I lie not, if I desire nothing more for myself than I desire for you, show me this favour. Yea, if willingly you call me master grant me my reward: be just."

Both his pupils promised better conduct in future. They changed sides, Licentius now requesting that his opponent's words should be cancelled, Trygetius that the record of his error should remain, which accordingly was done.

It is plain that Augustine's distress was not merely due to his pupils' rivalry, or to a young man's frivolous readiness to sacrifice an accepted belief for the sake of argumentative victory. It was also due to his personal belief that the doctrine, which was being so carelessly surrendered, was indeed the very truth. His solemn words, " Restrain yourself, for the Son is not improperly called God," are his first profession of faith in our Lord's Divinity. They are among the most important signs of his Christian progress which the whole records of the retreat exhibit.

At this point Monnica appeared, and inquired how the subject was progressing. Whereupon the shorthand writer put her question down. Monnica protested against a woman taking part in such discussions as an unheard-of thing. To which her son replied, that women had been philosophers, and that her philosophy greatly pleased him. He knew very well that his mother had advanced in the philosophy of life to a degree which is hard for the most learned of men. Her freedom from all fear of death was his deepest admiration, and he would willingly become her disciple.

Monnica replied that she had never heard Augustine tell so many fibs before. And here, for the sake of Augustine's weak health, further discussion was postponed.

Discussion was resumed in a few days, by which time Alypius had returned. The weather being bright, the little party assembled in the open air. After some desultory talk, Augustine raised the question whether the actions of a fool are within the sphere of order. For if the answer given is Yes, what becomes of Licentius' definition of order as the work of God? But if the answer is No, then there exists a sphere in which order does not enter: neither of these conclusions being acceptable to Licentius.

Trygetius replied that the entire life of a fool, although in itself by no means regulated, is nevertheless through Providence included in the sphere of order. It is ruled by an eternal law which it cannot escape.

Augustine confessed that he was greatly impressed by this idea. How the conclusion was known he did not see. But he believed that it was true. He thought that illustrations could be given to confirm it. An executioner, for example, however abnormal he appears, falls into the order of a regulated State. He holds a legalized position. If his official acts injure his own character, he con-

stitutes a retribution on crime. Augustine thinks this principle extends to sexual immorality. Or again, there was something distinctly attractive in the fighting chickens lately witnessed. The principle runs through everything, only it requires eyes to see it. Solecisms and barbarisms enhance the general effect of a literary work. The irregularities and inequalities in human affairs provoke in some men incredulity with regard to Providence. But there are good and able men who cannot be induced to deny the existence of Providential order, yet can only ascribe the confusions of life to inscrutable causes. Augustine's own opinion is that these things have value as discipline: while undoubtedly the element of mystery remains.

At the close Augustine assumed the rôle of teacher, or rather of a preacher, and went into a long and eloquent account of the ideals of a studious youth.

Then he added an affectionate and deferential exhortation to Monnica to retain her faith in religious mysteries, whatever were the problems and the speculations of an inquiring spirit.

CHAPTER XI

AUGUSTINE'S SOLILOQUIES

THE period of retreat between Augustine's conversion and his baptism was partly devoted to discussions with his pupils and friends, and partly to his own private reflections. The discussions were taken down in writing and afterwards expanded and published. These discussions throw considerable light on Augustine's religious development. While they instructed his hearers, they also expressed his own outlook and helped to clear his mind. More intimate, however, than these writings were his private reflections, which are recorded in the treatise called Soliloquies.[1]

The Soliloquies will not compare with the Confessions. That famous masterpiece was not written until after thirteen years of experience of life as a Christian. In richness of thought and human interest, in theological depth and devotional maturity, the Confessions altogether eclipse the earlier reflections. That is what might naturally be expected. The Soliloquies are the utterance of one who is in a state of obvious transition, one who is beginning to realize great ideas, but has by no means as yet fully assimilated them. The book reads like the work of a novice, a wonderful novice indeed, but yet a beginner whose great capacity shows that if he lives a marvellous development lies before him. The peculiar value of the Soliloquies lies in the fact that they were not written years

[1] A.D. 387.

after the event, like the Confessions, but in the freshness of actual experience, and therefore they fix the precise stage which Augustine's religious and theological progress had achieved in the interval between his conversion and his baptism.

The Soliloquies are cast into the form of a dialogue between Augustine and Reason. It is significant that this is the first historic use of the term "soliloquy." It is probable that Augustine originated it.

He begins with a long outpouring in prayer, in which we find the first flight of that devotional spirit afterwards matured in the Confessions. We know that previously to his conversion he had prayed. He has recorded among other prayers his anomalous petition that the grace of self-control might be postponed. After the conversion he records that both he and his pupils prayed. Here, however, in the Soliloquies the pent-up spirit of devotion seems released, pours out in a perfect flood. The name of God is uttered and repeated again and again, like the dominant theme of some mighty fugue; and each repetition develops some fresh aspect, some new idea, some hitherto unmentioned glory of Deity. The Holy Name is reiterated with what would be monotony, but is redeemed from monotony by the inexhaustible abundance of the thoughts which it awakens. God is conceived as Creator of all that is ("universitatis conditor"). Then also God is Father of Truth, Father of Wisdom, Father of Blessedness, Father of the good and beautiful; so that Fatherhood becomes the ruling idea.

It is a singular fact that, while obvious allusions occur to our Lord's utterances, our Lord himself is nowhere mentioned by name, still less is any petition directed to Him. At the same time, in this prayer Augustine alludes to the Christian doctrine of distinctions within the Deity. He speaks of a nature "ubi qui gignit, et quem gignit

unum est." [1] Here the distinction of the Father and of the Son within the divine Unity is clearly indicated.

The signs are unmistakable that Augustine has now advanced far beyond the God of philosophy to the God of religion. It is no abstract Deity which is now the object of his contemplation, but a personal Being with whom he is in intimate fellowship and communion. The God of the Soliloquies possesses all the characteristics of personality. God is for Augustine at this stage of his religious development the Being whom all love who are capable of loving, whether consciously or unconsciously. To go forth from God is to die, to return is to revive, to dwell in Him is to live.

Already Augustine addresses God as One "whom no one loses unless deceived; whom no one seeks, unless roused; whom no one finds unless purified." [2] Already he uplifts his soul in the fervid strains: "Hear me, hear me, hear me, my God, my Lord, my King, my Father, my Creator, my hope, my possession, my glory, my home, my country, my salvation, my light, my life." Already he can say, "Thee only do I love, Thee only follow, Thee only seek, Thee only I am ready to serve."

The doctrine of Grace has already been accepted in a still earlier writing. Augustine had already rejoiced to find his friend Alypius admitting the necessity of divine help for the discovery of truth.[3] But here in the Soliloquies the dependence of the human will on divine co-operation is made the basis of a very earnest appeal for strength: "Order, I pray, and command whatever Thou wilt, but heal me and open mine ears, that I may hear Thy call. Heal me, and open mine eyes, that I may see Thy guiding. Drive folly far from me, that I may discern Thee." Here we have anticipations of the famous language of the Confessions: a profound consciousness of inability

[1] *Soliloq.*, i. 4. [2] *Soliloq.*, i. 3. [3] *C. Academ.*, iii. 13.

apart from divine enlightenment and support. "If they who take refuge in Thee find Thee by faith, give me faith." He prays that God will increase within him faith and hope and love. For the writer of the Soliloquies, God is the source of strength.

And, further, in this prayer there occurs the note of penitence. This has been sometimes denied. Nevertheless, it is distinctly there. Not, of course, uttered with the intense and profuse self-reproaching of the Confessions. Twelve years of converted life greatly deepened his sense of sin. The Bishop did not speak like the neophyte. But when Augustine calls on God to cast madness out from him, to receive his fugitive; when he sorrowfully acknowledges that he has been the plaything of deceptions, and served God's enemies; surely the note of penitence is unmistakable. And it is important to insist on this. For Neoplatonist philosophy had no room for penitence. This strain of self-reproach was not derived from philosophy. It is the product of a study of St. Paul.

As has been already said, the Soliloquies are cast into the form of a dialogue between Reason and Self. But however dominant the part of Reason may be, Augustine is convinced that Reason alone is not competent to determine spiritual qualities. There is a moral qualification required. The eyes of the soul are able to see when the soul itself is pure from every fleshly stain; that is, when it is purged of every mortal desire. Until that condition is reached faith is indispensable. Faith must come first. On this necessity of faith Augustine lays much stress.

Indeed, in the Soliloquies he has already become familiar with the trio of Christian graces—faith, hope and love—and has come to appreciate their place in religious progress. All these are needful for the health of the soul.

Augustine subjects himself to a severe self-examination concerning his motives. He is now aged thirty-three. He asks himself whether his mind is set on money-making. He can say that for the last fourteen years he has ceased to be disturbed by that passion. Cicero's book Hortensius had taught him that wealth should not be an object of pursuit, but that if it came it should be administered with the highest caution and prudence. All he wants is such income as a free man requires for his maintenance.

He asks himself next about ambition. He confesses that until quite recently he was dominated by the longing to acquire honours and distinctions. There was a glamour about worldly success which fascinated him. But he is now able to say that this ambitious passion is passed.

Then he asks himself about marriage. He replies that for himself he neither seeks nor desires it. In a characteristic passage he said: "Whether the procreation of children was part of the function of the wise, which at present he was not able to say, he might concede that any person who entered the married state for this purpose only was to be admired but not imitated. For its dangers were more plain than its blessedness."

It is only fair to remember that the writer of these words was the son of a mixed marriage, and the witness of a father's disorderly career. While his early experience does by no means altogether account for the austerity of his estimate—for certainly the Monastic ideal had captivated him—yet his home life probably affected his judgment more fully than he was aware. At the same time, Augustine's transparent sincerity compelled him to acknowledge that his ideals did not as yet altogether correspond with his inclinations. He is in a very emotional state in these Soliloquies, and is deeply humiliated by his inconsistencies.

In this merciless self-analysis he owns himself greatly disturbed by three chief apprehensions—the fear of loss, the fear of death, and the fear of pain.

He questions himself about his reasons for fearing the loss of friends. Why does he desire that they should live with him? His answer is in order that they may together seek after God and acquire knowledge of their souls. He admits that if their friendship proved a hindrance to the attainment of wisdom he would desire to avoid it.

As to the fear of Death, could he rest assured that whether in the body or out of it, here or elsewhere, he could equally well attain to wisdom, he would have no such fear at all?

As to the fear of pain, he considers that physical pain is the greatest evil. For the greatest good is the best of the better part, and the greatest evil the worst of the worse part. Now wisdom is the best thing in the soul, and pain the worst in the body.

Augustine reflected in his Soliloquies that while the certainty of being immortal would indeed be great, yet it would by no means satisfy. It is also essential to know what sort of immortality it would be. What if immortal life were of such a kind that it allowed you to know nothing more than you already knew? To that question Augustine replied that if that were so he would weep his life away. Progress is essential to man's immortality.

Thereupon follows an inquiry into the nature of truth. A subtle line of reasoning is propounded. Now there is such a thing as truth. That proposition appears to him indisputable. But if there is, truth must exist somewhere.

It is characteristic of the great writer's deeply religious spirit that before proceeding much further he turns again to prayer, a brief but extraordinarily comprehensive

prayer: "God who art always the same, let me know myself, let me know Thee."

Resuming, then, this discussion about truth, Augustine argues that it is impossible to deny that there is such a thing as truth. Some things at any rate are true. Either the world will perish or it will not perish, and if it perishes it will be true that it has perished. Truth, then, cannot perish. But this truth—where does it reside? If the mind which observes truth ceases to exist, what has become of the truth which existed in the mind. Truth is relative to consciousness. The proposition is ventured that the world cannot exist apart from man. Consequently, it dawns upon the thinker that he is making progress toward belief in the soul's immortality, on the ground that mind is required for the preservation of truth. At the same time Augustine has misgivings. For the world is never without minds, who retain the truth, not because of their immortality, but because of their succession. Still it is boldly reasserted that the objects on which we gaze depend on us for their reality, and when we have gone they must cease to exist if no other human beings remain to contemplate them. That which does not appear to some intelligence or other must be considered not to exist. Nothing can be true unless it appears.

Once more Augustine turns from reasoning to devotion. "O God our Father, who dost exhort us to pray, and dost grant what we ask, if while we ask we live better and become better: hear me struggling in this darkness, stretch forth to me Thy right hand. Send out Thy light, recall me from wanderings. Guide me to return to myself and to thee. Amen."

After much discussion on dreams and seductive resemblances to reality and deceptions, which are explained as tending towards existence to which they are unable to

attain, it is asserted that what is inseparable from its subject cannot survive if the subject dies. And the conclusion is reaffirmed that the reality of truth requires the permanence of its recipient. Hence it is thought that the nature of truth becomes an argument for man's immortality. "If everything which is in the subject persists for ever, the subject itself must, of necessity, persist for ever."

The imperishable nature of truth involves the immortality of its recipient. God and the soul remain, because truth is in them. And, adds Augustine, "no man doubts concerning the immortality of God." Truth cannot die. Therefore we shall not doubt the everlasting continuance of the mind. Knowledge is in the mind, and physical death cannot cause the mind to perish. If it could, then truth could perish, which is impossible.

There are several singular features about these Soliloquies. One certainly is the mingling of metaphysics with devotion: or rather the fact that the whole reasoning is pervaded by a deeply prayerful spirit. Again and again the reasoner pauses and takes refuge in prayer. Augustine has already realized the necessity of grace: the helplessness of the human soul to ascertain the truth without enlightenment and purification which God alone can give.

Another characteristic of the Soliloquies is the place assigned in reaching truth to the Christian qualities of faith, hope and love.

By far the most remarkable feature of these Soliloquies is that Augustine here propounds the theory of idealism. Truth and thinker are correlative. Truth has no existence apart from mind. The existence of the thing seen depends upon the seer. In propositions of this nature we have the elements of Berkeley's theory already expressed. We find Augustine conscious of the weakness

of his inference that the permanence of truth requires the permanence of the human mind which contemplates it. He raises the difficulty that the permanence of the individual is not thereby established. May not the required condition of the permanence of truth be satisfied by the succession of human individuals? But the curious thing is that Augustine apparently does not face the question, Where was truth before man existed? He speaks distinctly of the immortality of God, which he says no one disputes. But he nowhere suggests that the home of truth is the eternal mind of God. He is so intent on arguing for human immortality that he does not dwell on the fact that the conditions required for the permanence of truth are completely fulfilled and satisfied in Deity.

The Soliloquies in their devotional sections are full of Scriptural phrases which reveal how much Augustine has been reading the New Testament, and how familiar he is already growing with its language. Already he speaks of God leading us into all truth, opening the door to those who knock, giving us the Bread of Life, and the living water which causes us never to thirst again, and of God convincing the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, God through whom we are not in bondage to weak and beggarly elements. All these allusions and quotations are crowded into a narrow space, and instructively show how extensive the range of Augustine's Scripture reading has already been, and also the authority which he already assigns to them. All this by no means necessarily involves a clear apprehension on the neophyte's part of the dogmas which lay behind them. But they certainly prove the direction in which Augustine was moving, and the great advance he had made from a purely philosophic position.

If the form in which the Soliloquies are cast seems to assign a very high place to the reason, yet a careful study

of the book makes clear that Augustine realizes that reason by itself is not adequate to bring the soul to God. He is conscious that much, very much, depends upon the will. "I know not," he says, "how any rational demonstration of God could satisfy me: for I do not believe that I know anything as I desire to know God." In other words, the spiritual quest for God demands the entire personality: the will just as certainly as the intellect. Indeed, Augustine seems to emphasize will rather than intellect. For he says, "I have nothing else than my will." Thus the great writer rises above the mere intellectualism which was the bane of the previous attitude towards religion.

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION OF RETREAT

AUGUSTINE'S residence at the villa beyond Milan extended over several months, from the autumn of 386 to the spring of 387.

It is advisable to look back across the process, and to gather the main lines of his development. Otherwise the real importance may be missed amid the details of the discussions.

It has been sometimes maintained that Augustine's conversion in the garden was a conversion to Neoplatonist philosophy and to moral life, rather than to the theology of the Catholic religion. But it must be remembered that the garden scene is not the conversion of a pagan totally ignorant of the Catholic religion, but of one whose antecedents were Christian, and who found no satisfaction in writings which omitted the name of Christ. He had already heard and benefited greatly from St. Ambrose's teaching. He had already determined to become a Catholic again. He was already prepared in intention to accept the authority of the Catholic Church. His conversion culminated in a passage of St. Paul, and that passage is not only concerned with making no provision to fulfil the lusts of the flesh, but also with putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. How far Augustine grasped at the date of his conversion what putting on Christ involved is uncertain. It may be said that while no doubt his mind was still, and long continued to be, under the influence of

Neoplatonist ideas, some of which were incompatible with Christianity, he had nevertheless given implicit assent to the contents of the Christian faith, although naturally the explicit realization of those contents lay to a considerable degree in the future. Augustine was very far from being completely Catholic on the day of his religious experience in the garden. But it was the crisis of a great transition in which, according to his own prayer in the Soliloquies,[1] it is God who converts and leads men into all truth, and calls the wandering back into the way. His theology, during the retreat after conversion, still reveals many an imperfection, judged from the standpoint of the theology of the Church, as he himself was afterwards well aware. Neither concerning our Lord, nor the Holy Trinity, had he as yet grasped what he afterwards came to know. Nevertheless, in intention he was a Catholic.

Augustine confided his state of mind to his friend Theodorus in an interesting letter, written during retreat in the autumn of 386. The writer freely displays the habits of the rhetorician. But he relates important facts about his own intellectual development. He says that Cicero's Hortensius had kindled in him a burning love for philosophy, but that he had fallen since that into a childish superstition: so he calls the Manichæan Dualism. If he escaped from that it was only to be detained by Scepticism. Since then, however, he had gathered from the teaching of Theodorus, his correspondent, and from "our priest," meaning Ambrose, that neither the nature of God nor of the human soul is material. This conception of the spiritual nature of Deity obviously delivered him from the error of Manichæism. Moreover, he had fallen in with some Platonist writings, of which he knows that Theodorus is an admirer. And—what is deserving of special notice—he has been comparing them with the authority of those

[1] *Soliloq.*, i. 1.

who have transmitted the divine mysteries. Here the contrast between reason and authority is unmistakable. In the opening sentence of this letter Augustine had already expressed his conviction that if the attainment of philosophy leading to the blessed life depended on the conclusions of reason, far fewer men would reach it than is even now the case. This shows how deeply Augustine was by this time impressed with the human need for and dependence upon authority. He was evidently trying to strengthen by reasoning what he had already accepted by faith. And this explains what he goes on to say. He calls on Theodorus to assist him: for in what direction blessedness lies he confesses that he is ignorant. He is still in difficulties about the soul. He regards Theodorus as one who has already attained that certainty towards which he aspires.

It is undoubtedly startling to find Augustine subsequently to his conversion declaring that he has nothing which he holds as certain, and that he is held back from the search for truth by the arguments and disputes of the philosophers.[1] But Augustine himself expressly says that unless he was already persuaded that truth could be found, there would be no reason to seek, nor anything to defend. And the startling character of this admission is considerably modified when it is remembered that what is being sought is logical demonstration, a reasoned and conclusive proof. It is actually said in so many words in one place that the discussion was an endeavour to ascertain by reason what was already accepted by faith.[2] Also that from this point onward Augustine begins a vigorous criticism of the sceptical standpoint and ends by setting it altogether aside.

When he began his retreat he had passed through the severest strain, both moral and emotional. Physically he was positively ill. Intellectually he was in a condition of

[1] *C. Academ.*, ii. 23. [2] *De Lib. arbitr.*

confusion. He had received no thorough systematic instruction in the Christian faith. His conversion was a moral self-surrender to Christ as the divine authority, as the Incarnation of Deity. His belief in a personal God is evident. But these convictions by no means necessarily imply a complete apprehension of their bearings. Conflicting theories still claimed possession of his mind. Their relation to Christianity had yet to be thought out. Dualism, Scepticism, Neoplatonism, had all exerted a powerful influence over the past, and still in various degrees retained their influence over him. Dualism was being overcome. Scepticism had loosened its former hold. Neoplatonism was still in very considerable force. It was not to be expected that a mind which had surrendered in succession to each of these would easily exclude what it had so fervently admitted. Moreover, the doctrines of the Catholic Church, while in principle they were in process of being accepted, were by no means as yet realized in their full bearing on the theories which he had accepted in the past.

1. Augustine's reasons for abandoning Dualism were nowhere fully discussed during his retreat. His refutation of Manichæism belongs to a later time. The discussion on the freedom of the will maintains that evil consists in man's deliberate turning away from God. This affirmation of the voluntary nature of evil is, of course, a clear rejection of the Dualistic ascription of evil to a material substance. It is a recognition of individual responsibility. But this discussion was not held until Augustine had returned to Rome, in 388. Nor was it completed until his return to Africa. Still, the main principle must unquestionably have become his decided conviction while he was in retreat, if not before that time. Dualism, therefore, had evidently become a doctrine to be controverted for the sake of enlightening others, but not

for the sake of clearing his own mind. He had already accepted the doctrine of the Incarnation; and no doctrine could be a more complete rejection of Manichæan identification of evil with matter than the doctrine that God became flesh.

2. But while Augustine dealt indirectly with Dualism during his retreat, he concentrated attention on Scepticism. There are passages, indeed, in his reply to the Sceptics which sound as if he had no intellectual certainty. But he goes on to declare himself convinced that truth can be ascertained. Indeed, he adds that search for truth is unreasonable except on the basis of that conviction.[1] His reply to the Sceptics shows as it proceeds that he believed himself to have refuted them completely. He admits that their arguments had greatly shaken him; but he is confident that he is now fortified against their destructive influence.[2]

3. Meanwhile, the Neoplatonist philosophy had delivered him from the Dualism of the Manichæan religion.[3] It accomplished this result partly through its reduction of reality to unity. One ultimate principle instead of two commended itself to the demands of reason. Multiplicity demanded unity. The new philosophy helped him also partly through its intensely religious character. This mystical tendency appealed strongly to his temperament and innermost disposition. He was led to say most enthusiastic things about Neoplatonism in the first fervour of his adherence.[4] He compared its ideas to the sweetest fragrance. He went so far as to say that the change of a few expressions would turn Neoplatonism into Christianity. In language more restrained, he was confident of finding in that philosophy principles which were not discordant with the Christian religion.[5] He regretted some of his

[1] *C. Academ.*, ii. 23. [2] *Ibid.*, iii. 42. [3] *Ibid.*, i. 3.
[4] *Ibid.*, ii. 5. [5] *Ibid.*, iii. 43.

more rapturous expressions afterwards; and, on later reflection, remarked that Platonism was more attractive than convincing. But this critical reserve was not at all his attitude at first. The main principles of Neoplatonism had brought him a great deliverance. At the same time, this philosophy had to be regarded in two ways: as an escape from Dualism and as an incentive toward Christianity.

4. For Augustine in his retreat had already accepted Christ and Christianity. The Christian religion came to him as a religion of authority; and this characteristic, which repelled him at an earlier time, was now attractive. His experience of Manichæism as professedly a religion of reason made the claims of the Church all the more acceptable. For he had learnt in his long years of wandering the narrow limits, and consequent requirements of the human mind. Philosophy rests on reason.[1] But it succeeds in emancipating extremely few people. Reason may be better adapted for the highly trained; but authority, with its correlative faith, is safer for the generality. Indeed, he continues, painfully conscious of the aberrations of the intelligent, since every man begins as inexperienced, and no inexperienced person can do without a teacher, it is authority which must lead the way, and men must advance by acts of faith.[2]

Augustine is accordingly convinced that all men must begin with assenting to authority. For himself, he says, he has determined never to depart from the authority of Christ. For he knows no greater.[3]

At the same time, he is perfectly clear that the sources at our disposal for ascertaining truth are not merely one, but two. There is reason as well as faith. And while he has resolved to abide by the authority of Christ, he has not the smallest desire to acquiesce indefinitely in mere acts of faith. He is eagerly desirous to prove by reason-

[1] *De ordine*, ii. 16. [2] *Ibid.*, ii. 25. [3] *C. Academ.*, iii. 43.

ing. But since the soul of man is in darkness, his unaided mental powers are inadequate by themselves to reach the truth. Yet as the soul becomes gradually enlightened, reason increases in insight and power. Hence he hopes some day to comprehend what he now accepts by faith. And even now he relies to some extent on reason. For philosophy contains some things which do not contradict divine revelation. Indeed, faith is prior to reason in the order of time, but reason is prior to faith in the order of intrinsic worth. And yet even this comparison of the value of faith and reason he qualifies elsewhere by observing that there are hours when the intuitions of faith appear so convincing that he wonders why he should seek for any further proof of reason.

Augustine had already resolved to be baptized. He believed himself to have already accepted the Catholic religion. To put this more precisely, he had realized that the Christian religion is the religion of the Incarnation. And that was what he had accepted.

Augustine then understood the central principle of the Church to be that the Supreme Deity has in love given to mankind the authority of the divine Logos, in the Incarnation. This doctrine is transmitted by the Church, and contained in the sacred mysteries in which we are instructed.

To say that Augustine had already accepted this doctrine is not necessarily to say that he had realized as yet its full implications. He had not yet received the instruction given to the candidates for baptism. He had only accepted the doctrine a month or two. But whatever imperfections may have existed in his Christology, his wonderful mind had already realized during the period of retreat the bearing of this great doctrine alike as a revelation of the nature of evil, and as a revelation of the character of God.

He understood already, and quite distinctly, that this

doctrine excludes the Dualism of the Manichæans. For if evil is identified with matter, the entrance of Deity into flesh would be inconceivable, because contaminating. Belief in the Incarnation, or entrance of the Logos into human conditions, presupposes belief in the goodness of the material universe, and in the nature of evil as a product of the will. No doctrine could well involve a completer repudiation of Dualism than Incarnation.

Augustine also already understood that Incarnation revealed the character of God. The moral value of this great principle deeply impressed him while he was in retreat. The lower our human condition is, the greater is the goodness and condescension shown in Incarnation. The more conspicuous is the contrast with human pride.[1] The doctrine which the authority of tradition delivers is that God by deeds revealed His power, by condescension His goodness, and by teaching His nature.[2] And this authority appears to Augustine to be divine, and therefore to possess a security which no human authority can possess.

Already, then, while still in retreat, Augustine held the authoritative doctrine of the Church that Christ "was sent to us from God the Father," and thereby is the Revelation of God's love.[3]

In all this doctrine Augustine had gone entirely beyond the limit of Neoplatonist ideas.

The phrase in the Soliloquies concerning Deity, where Augustine says that "He who begets and He who is begotten is one" (i. 4), unquestionably shows the influence of Christian theology. At the same time, it betrays an imperfect apprehension. Indeed, it failed to satisfy Augustine's later thought. "Is one" must be corrected into "are one," Augustine wrote. For the Truth Himself has openly declared this when He said, "I and the Father are one."[4]

[1] *De Ordine*, ii. 16. [2] *Ibid.*, ii. 27. [3] *Ibid.*, i. 29.
[4] *Retract.*, i. 4, 3.

In fact Augustine tells us that he had already heard Ambrose at Milan repudiate the Arian conception of the person of Christ.[1] Moreover, we have already seen how emphatically Augustine spoke when one of his pupils was led in the heat of discussion to vacillate on the true Deity of Christ. "Restrain yourself," exclaimed Augustine, "the Son is not called God in any figurative sense." Nowhere in all the writings of that time did Augustine speak with such impassioned and even tearful earnestness against sacrificing truth for the sake of argumentative success. It was the Christian who spoke out there.[2]

At the same time, it is true that we miss in Augustine's conception of Christianity at this period any clear realization of Christ as the Redeemer. The doctrine of Atonement has not yet entered Augustine's horizon.

Augustine had not only grasped the doctrine of the Incarnation during the period of retreat. His thoughts were also occupied with the doctrine of the Trinity. His mind had long been made familiar with three-fold ideas of Deity among the Manichæans. Manichæism, according to Faustus, its principal African exponent, taught the existence of One Deity under the three-fold title of the Almighty Father, who resided in the light invisible, His Son Christ, who resided in the visible light, and the Holy Spirit, who inhabited the atmosphere. But this terminology, which was evidently borrowed from the Church, was utilized to conceal vital contradiction to the Church's principles. The words were Christian, the ideas were not.

It may safely be said that such Trinitarian ideas as the Manichæan religion contained had no longer any effect on Augustine's mind. But with the Trinitarianism in the Neoplatonist philosophy it was otherwise. It must be remembered that according to that philosophy the Ultimate Reality was the Absolute, the original Unity,

[1] *Conf.*, ix. 15. [2] *De Ordine*, i. 29.

of which nothing could be predicated because nothing could be known. But Plotinus held that out of this first principle proceeded a second. The second is Intelligence. But this second principle is inferior to the first. And from this second proceeds a third, which is Universal Soul, or soul of the world. This third principle is inferior to the second, and gives life to the body of the universe. Plotinus taught that the first principle has in itself neither love nor knowledge. Thus existence is explained by a series of emanations, a graduated scale of increasing inferiority. The three principles of this philosophy are essentially different and unequal.

It is as plain as light that a Trinitarianism of this sort has no connection whatever with the Catholic doctrine of the Holy Trinity. This was admirably put by St. Cyril of Alexandria.[1] He said that when Plotinists acknowledged three existences, and sometimes employed the term the Trinity, "they are in agreement with the faith of Christians, and nothing is needed but that they should apply to these Three the term consubstantial to denote the Unity of God, in whom this triplicity does not imply a difference of nature, and to whom these existences are not inferior one to another."

St. Cyril acutely indicates the contrast between Plotinus and the Christian conception of Deity. The former held a series of emanations from the Unknowable, essentially distinct: the latter three persons in one indivisible essential Being.

The contrasts between the Neoplatonist Trinitarianism and the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity are very great indeed. Augustine says that he has already received, on the authority which he recognizes as divine, that the Son of God is nothing else than the Wisdom of God, and also that the Son of God is actually God. There

[1] St. Cyril Alex., *C. Julian*, viii. 270 (quoted by Grandgeorge, p. 92).

is an essential equality therefore between the Father and the Son. The Son is born of the Father, but the birth is eternal. The Son is Truth. And truth never existed without the Supreme Harmony, nor the Supreme Harmony without the truth. They are coequal.[1] Elsewhere Augustine speaks of the One God, omnipotent, tripotent, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, taught by the sacred mysteries, and a faith which sets the people free.[2] Certainly these statements show that Augustine was already advancing from the philosophic theories to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. He was already affirming what no Neoplatonist could admit.

But there is another difference between Augustine in retreat and Neoplatonism, which is hardly less significant. It is the character of his devotions. Neoplatonism is inspired with a profound admiration for the mysterious Power which it regards as the Ultimate Reality, of which nothing can be predicated, and which is represented as perfection rather than holiness. It is a metaphysical ideal, not a moral. The peculiarity of Neoplatonism is its mystical reverence and enthusiastic devotion towards the Infinite which possesses none of the characteristics of personality. The Original Unity of the Neoplatonist cannot be called self-conscious, still less good or loving. Consequently, Neoplatonic devotion, when directed to the Original Unity, is necessarily destitute of all mutual relation between persons. There can be no sense of personal loyalty, beyond such as can be given to an abstraction. There is no one who can be addressed as "Thou"—no one who cares, for there is no one who hears. The devotion is entirely on one side. There is no divine response. Love of such an abstraction, supposing it possible, is essentially other and opposed to the love for a personal Deity.

[1] *De Beata Vita*, 34. [2] *De Ordine*, ii. 16.

The contrast between this Neoplatonist object of mystical enthusiasm and Augustine's object of prayer during his retreat is immense. They are worlds apart. That is shown in the great devotional opening of the Soliloquies. We have already seen that this prayer contains the following characteristics:—

(1) A constant recognition of the Fatherhood of God.
(2) An acknowledgment of distinctions in the Deity.
(3) An anticipation of the Christian doctrine of grace, the imperative indispensable necessity of divine help if the lower self is not to overcome the higher in man.
(4) The note of penitence.

In addition to all this devotional element in Augustine's writings during this period, there are the references to his prayers and to the prayers of his pupils. We have already seen that the day began with private prayer; that Augustine's own private prayers were of considerable length; that he was moved even to tears to hear his pupil, Licentius, singing the words of the Psalm, "Turn us again, Thou God of Hosts; show us the light of Thy countenance and we shall be whole." We have further seen that they also said prayers together; that devotional utterances are heard at intervals in their discussions, and that the day closed, as it began, with prayer. All this proves how far the practical devotional side of the Christian religion permeated the daily life of Augustine in retreat.

To these devotions during the period of his retreat must be added Augustine's reading during the same. It is not easy to be quite certain what books he read. His reading in Virgil and Cicero's Hortensius was, no doubt, for his pupils' instruction. He had already begun in Milan the study of St. Paul's Epistles. He wrote from his retreat asking Ambrose's advice what part of the Bible to read.

Ambrose recommended Isaiah. After reading one chapter Augustine thought this unsuitable, and read no further. But there is no doubt that he was laying the foundations of that wonderful knowledge of Scripture which, shortly after his return to Africa, appears in the profuse quotations and allusions in his book on True Religion. He tells us also[1] that he read at this time, with much spiritual gain, the fourth Psalm, which appealed very strongly to his religious state.

That Augustine was well aware that he was in a great period of transition appears from letters to his friend Nebridius, which were written at this time. Nebridius wrote congratulating Augustine with having already acquired blessedness. Augustine replied disclaiming the attainment of anything so perfect. He says that Nebridius had only read some of his earlier books. "What would he have written if he had read my Soliloquies? He would have rejoiced still more. But he would not have found a higher term to call me than happy."[2] Augustine had not, therefore, arrived at the perfect goal. Nevertheless, he feels that the Soliloquies show advance in his religious progress. And since Nebridius was deeply interested in his friend's intellectual progress in a region where he was as yet unable to follow, Augustine wrote again.[3] This time he speaks as one conscious indeed of great advancement, which, however, it was difficult with any precision to define. He compares it with the transition from youth to manhood, in which, while the change is manifest, one cannot fix precisely the hour when the change is made. It is a gradual unfolding. So is it with his religious growth. He is still in the earlier stage, yet promising. He adopts a tone of caution and reserve, while yet he is frankly conscious that the process is going on. Things are becoming increasingly plain. He has appealed for the divine

[1] *Conf.*, ix. 8. [2] *Ep.* iii. [3] *Ep.* iv.

help. He has begun to gain things that are "verissime vera"—la vraie Vérité. Indeed there are times when spiritual things appear to him as real as his own existence, so that he wonders why he should stand in need of reasonings.

Augustine was already, so far as intention goes, a Catholic Christian during the time of his retreat. For he had already openly resolved in no way to depart from the authority of Christ.[1] And this on the ground that he knew no greater. Certainly in the year after he was baptized he could speak with conviction of the reality of those doctrines which Mother Church taught us to believe. He could speak of being not more certain that the setting sun would rise, than certain of the resurrection of the flesh. He could speak of the Virgin Birth of the Eternal Son of God.[2]

But even apart from these very definite assurances of faith in the Catholic religion, the mere fact of his resolving not to depart from the authority of Christ in itself involves the whole principle of placing religion above philosophy, and of accepting a religion of authority rather than a religion of a rationalistic type.

Upon the whole, then, on review of this period of retreat, two features strike us.

It was admittedly a period of imperfect knowledge. He was consciously emerging from inadequate systems of thought, and was being delivered from erroneous conceptions long adhered to. If the deliverance was slower than he desired, he felt it was more rapid than he deserved. He was firmly convinced that his ignorance was greater than he knew, and that he was a babe in spiritual things, scarcely acquainted with the rudiments of the truth.

It was, on the other hand, a period of remarkable insight into spiritual truth. There was a gradual transition to

[1] *C. Academ.*, iii. 43. [2] *De Qant. Animae*, 76.

Christian principles; a distinct modification of Neoplatonist ideas wherever they conflict with the fundamental dogmas of the Church. These writings are the productions of a neophyte in the first few months after his conversion; a very wonderful neophyte indeed, second to none after St. Paul, but yet a neophyte. He was going through a process corresponding to that of Saul of Tarsus in his retreat in Arabia. Finally, it must be remembered that all these illustrations of Augustine's thought were written before he returned to Milan to be instructed by the Church and incorporated by baptism.

On the whole, therefore, it seems correct to say that Augustine's conversion was not altogether to theology, but to faith in Christ and the Church, and to moral purity.[1] He had already an implicit faith in what the Church believed, for he had already accepted and subjected himself to the Church's authority. But the implications involved in this acknowledgment of the principle of authority, whether of Christ or of the Church, were very imperfectly realized by him as yet. He came to know more of the distinctive Christian dogmas during his instruction for baptism.

[1] Cf. Mausbach, *Die Ethik des h. Aug.*, i. 13.

CHAPTER XIII

AUGUSTINE'S BAPTISM

IN the Lenten season of the year 387 Augustine returned to Milan, and placed himself under instruction for baptism, together with Alypius and Adeodatus, who was now nearly fifteen years old. Presumably the instruction was given by the Bishop. But not a detail remains. The time was not long enough between Lent and Easter to allow elaborate systematic teaching on the great doctrines and principles of the faith. It is greatly to be wished that we knew precisely what the instructions were which the great Bishop of Milan gave to his still greater disciple.

Years afterwards Augustine alluded to the preparation of candidates for baptism, and said that instruction concerning the Christian faith and the Christian life began from the time that a convert was placed among the catechumens. This instruction was more fully and carefully given when the convert had given in his name to be baptized, and was classed among those who were known as seekers ("conpetentes"). The great writer was not merely relating the ordinary practice of the Church, but also recording his own experience. For he added that he recollected how intent and anxious he himself had been, when passing through the class of seekers, about the teaching given by those who catechized him.[1] Unhappily, he did not tell us what that teaching

[1] *De Fide et Operibus*, 9 (written in 413).

was. But he insists that there is not a time when a convert is more eager to learn, and therefore more ready to be taught, than the time when he is wistful to receive that Sacrament of regeneration. This reference, written some six-and-twenty years after the event, shows how deep an impression his preparation for baptism in the Cathedral at Milan had made upon him.

Further impressions of this period may also be found in the book which Augustine afterwards wrote on catechizing,[1] especially where he speaks of an educated person coming to be prepared for baptism. Persons of this type, he remarks, do not begin their search into Christian principles at the time when they come to be made Christians, but have reflected on this subject long before. Consequently they are not to be laboriously instructed in what they already know. Such men should be asked whether they have already heard these things. But they should be questioned about the motives which led them to desire to be made Christians. Augustine states his firm conviction that it is the rarest possible thing, indeed it never happens, that a man desires to be a Christian unless he is prompted by the motive of fear. They should be asked what books they have read. If they have studied the Canonical Books, the authority of these books should be commended. Then also as to their reading in other literature, whether it has been orthodox or heretical. Caution is necessary, for there is the danger of being misled by error through its resemblance to truth.[2] That is the case even in the study of well-intentioned men. And no wonder, for even Scripture itself is liable to similar misunderstanding. An educated convert must be reminded and warned about all this, when he comes to be admitted to the society of the Christian people.

[1] *De catech. Rudibus*, 12. [2] Veri similitudine aberrantes a veritate.

Sometimes the instruction given to a person of this type will disconcert and offend him because it is opposed to some long-standing opinion of his own. In that case authority and reason must be immediately given him. For there is a very real danger that he might go away and never return.

Augustine records that it was customary in Churches across the sea (the reference is probably to Italy) for both catechist and learner to be seated during the instruction: which custom he thinks much better than the African practice in which the learner stood.

In a striking passage Augustine dwells on the motive for becoming a Christian. Eternal blessedness consists in the love of God. What that means he expresses by the most forcible alternative. If God could say to the soul, You shall have all sinful self-indulgence, without any penalty of death or hell, but only that you shall not be with Me: the soul that loves Him would refuse to sin, not out of fear of penalty, but out of love.

Ambrose, in one of his letters, describes such an occasion. "The day after, which was Sunday, after the lessons and the sermon, when the catechumens were dismissed, I was teaching the Creed to certain candidates in the baptistery of the Basilica."[1] The Creed which Ambrose taught was clearly the Nicene. For that was the Creed in which he instructed the young Emperor Gratian, insisting on the phrase that Christ is "of one substance with the Father."[2] The authority of the Church was the main principle of Ambrose's teaching. The famous sentence, "It was not by dialectic that it pleased God to save His people,"[3] shows the method he would adopt in instructing Augustine; and it would

[1] *Ep.*, xx. 4. [2] *De Fide*, i. 5.
[3] *Ibid.*, 42 (non in dialectica complacuit Deo salvum facere populum suum).

certainly harmonize with the learner's conviction of the limits of reasoning and the necessity for faith.

But while Augustine frequently mentions Ambrose, Ambrose nowhere mentions Augustine. We are left to piece together fragmentary hints if we would form a clear picture of that memorable scene in the baptistery at Milan.

There was wide difference of temperament and characteristics between the teacher and the taught. Ambrose was the legal and administrative type, both mystical and practical, but he had nothing of the philosophic and speculative intellect of the great convert whom he was teaching. How far a teacher like Ambrose would be able to meet the requirements of that deeply philosophic mind may be questionable. But what is certain is that Augustine listened with profound regard for the spiritual ascendency of his instructor. "He is my teacher," wrote Augustine many years later.[1] Ambrose had taught him the doctrine of justification by grace—justification through the washing of regeneration. Ambrose combined a pessimistic view of man's natural condition with an optimistic view of his capacities for restoration through grace, which commended his instruction to Augustine's experience and Augustine's needs. Ambrose was regarded by Augustine as the teacher of the doctrine of grace. Passages of that teaching were quoted by him thirty years afterwards. And still, after that lapse of time, he could write concerning Ambrose, "He was a man of God, a Catholic teacher, the most strenuous defender of Catholic truth against heresy even at the risk of his own life."

Augustine records about his baptism, "It pleased Alypius also to be with me born again in Thee, being already clothed with the humility befitting Thy sacraments. . . . We joined with us the boy Adeodatus. . . .

[1] *C. Julian.* ii. 21, 22.

Excellently hadst Thou made him. He was not quite fifteen, and in intelligence surpassed many grave and learned men." [1]

Over the entrance to a little Chapel, near the Church of St. Ambrose at Milan, is an inscription to the effect that the Blessed Augustine, brought to the light of faith through St. Ambrose, was here cleansed in the heavenly waters, in the year of our Lord 388.[2]

Further instruction was given in the Cathedral at Milan after the candidates had been baptized. No doubt something of the meaning of baptism must have been taught before that Sacrament was actually conferred. But there was a feeling in the Church of that age that sacramental doctrine should not be entrusted to the uninitiated. To do that would be, so they thought, to betray the mysteries. It is easy to form an idea of the teaching given to the baptized at Milan. It can be found in Ambrose's book concerning the mysteries, which was composed for that purpose, and probably written a year before the time of Augustine's admission into the Church.

Baptism at Milan was clearly by immersion. Ambrose speaks of " descending " into the water and " ascending " to the priest, and Ambrose reminded the baptized that they had " entered the sanctuary of regeneration." [3] They had promised to " renounce the devil and his works, the world with its luxury and pleasures." The flesh was washed in water in order " that all carnal sin may be washed away." " By this you may recognize that water does not cleanse without the Spirit." " Believe then that the Lord Jesus is present at the invocation of the priest, Who said, Where two or three are, there am I also. How much more where the Church is, and where His mysteries are, does He vouchsafe to impart His

[1] *Conf.*, ix. 14. [2] Robertson, *History of the Church*, ii. 124.
[3] Ambrose, *On the Mysteries*, ix.

presence." White robes, says Ambrose, were given to the newly baptized as an emblem of innocence, illustrating in ceremonial what the Psalm expressed in words: "Thou shalt wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." Then followed the spiritual seal, which conferred, says Ambrose, "the seven gifts of the Spirit"; an obvious allusion to confirmation. Then, thus cleansed and adorned, the converts "hastened to the Altar of Christ, saying 'I will go to the Altar of God.'" Then Ambrose explained the nature of the Eucharistic gift: "This is not what nature made, but what the blessing consecrated; and the power of blessing is greater than that of nature, for by blessing nature itself is changed." [1] Concerning this change in the elements, Ambrose gave some Scripture illustrations; such as the rock pouring forth water which by nature it did not contain; and the conversion of the waters of Marah into sweetness. "But if the blessing of man had such power as to change nature, what are we to say of that divine consecration where the very words of the Lord and Saviour operate? For that Sacrament which you receive is made what it is by the Word of Christ." [2] "You read concerning the making of the whole world: 'He spake and they were made, He commanded and they were created.' Shall not the Word of Christ, which was able to make out of nothing that which was not, be able to change things which already are into what they were not?" "The Lord Jesus Himself proclaims: 'This is My Body.' Before the blessing of the heavenly words another nature is spoken of, after the consecration the Body is signified." [3]

Christ then, said the teacher, feeds His Church with these Sacraments, and by their means the soul is strengthened.

[1] Ambrose, *On the Mysteries*, ix. 50. [2] *Ibid.*, ix. 52.
[3] *Ibid.*, ix. 54.

Such was the type of instruction, probably almost the very phrases, in which Ambrose taught Augustine in the baptistery at Milan. Readers of the great African's later writings will recognize at once that there are ideas in them concerning the Eucharistic gift which naturally follow upon such instruction as that received at Milan.

CHAPTER XIV

MONNICA'S DEATH AT OSTIA

AFTER his incorporation into the Church Augustine was filled with longing to return to his native land. Probably this was also Monnica's desire. She would never have left Africa except in search of her son, and his reception of the Catholic religion had rewarded her prayers. Mother and son were now united in one faith. She was living in the joyful conviction that the long discordant years were ended, and she was never to be divided any more in the things of lasting moment from the son of her tears.

So the little company took farewell of Milan and its Bishop and made their way to Ostia. Like the record of the conversion in the garden at Milan, the record of the scene in the window at Ostia can only be given in the great writer's own words:— [1]

> "The day now approaching whereon she was to depart this life (which day Thou well knewest, we knew not), it came to pass, Thyself, as I believe, by Thy secret ways so ordering it, that she and I stood alone, leaning in a certain window, which looked into the garden of the house where we now lay, at Ostia; where, removed from the din of men, we were recruiting from the fatigues of a long journey, for the voyage. We were discoursing then together, alone, very sweetly; and forgetting those things which

[1] *Conf.*, ix. 23–29 (Pusey's translation, pp. 173–177).

are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, we were enquiring between ourselves in the presence of the truth, which Thou art, of what sort the eternal life of the saints was to be, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man. But yet we gasped with the mouth of our heart, after those heavenly streams of Thy fountain, the fountain of life, which is with Thee; that being bedewed thence according to our capacity, we might in some sort meditate upon so high a mystery.

"And when our discourse was brought to that point, that the very highest delight of the earthly senses, in the very purest material light, was, in respect of the sweetness of that life, not only not worthy of comparison, but not even of mention; we raising up ourselves with a more glowing affection toward the 'Self-Same,' did by degrees pass through all things bodily, even the very heaven whence sun and moon and stars shine upon the earth; yea, we were soaring higher yet, by inward musing, and discourse, and admiring of Thy works; and we came to our own minds, and went beyond them, that we might arrive at that region of never-failing plenty, where Thou feedest Israel for ever with the food of truth, and where life is the wisdom by whom all these things are made, and what have been, and what shall be, and she is not made, but is, as she hath been, and so shall she be ever; yea, rather, to 'have been,' and 'hereafter to be,' are not in her, but only 'to be,' seeing she is eternal. For to 'have been,' and to 'be hereafter,' are not eternal. And while we were discoursing and panting after her, we slightly touched on her with the whole effort of our heart; and we sighed, and there we leave bound

the first-fruits of the Spirit; and returned to vocal expressions of our mouth, where the word spoken has beginning and end. And what is like unto Thy Word, our Lord, who endureth in Himself without becoming old, and maketh all things new?

"We were saying then: If to any the tumult of the flesh were hushed, hushed the images of earth, and waters, and air, hushed also the poles of heaven, yea, the very soul be hushed to herself, and by not thinking on self surmount self, hushed all dreams and imaginary revelations, every tongue and every sign, and whatsoever exists only in transition, since if any could hear, all these say, We made not ourselves, but He made us that abideth for ever—If then having uttered this, they too should be hushed, having roused only our ears to Him who made them, and He alone speak, not by them, but by Himself, that we may hear His Word, not through any tone of flesh, nor Angel's voice, nor sound of thunder, nor in the dark riddle of a similitude, but, might hear whom in these things we love, might hear His Very Self without these (as we two now strained ourselves, and in swift thought touched on that Eternal Wisdom, which abideth over all);—could this be continued on, and other visions of kind far unlike be withdrawn, and this one ravish, and absorb, and wrap up its beholder amid these inward joys, so that life might be for ever like that one moment of understanding which now we sighed after; were not this, Enter into thy Master's joy? And when shall that be? When we shall all rise again, though we shall not all be changed?

"Such things was I speaking, and even if not in this very manner, and these same words, yet, Lord, Thou knowest, that in that day when we were speak-

ing of these things, and this world with all its delights became, as we spake, contemptible to us, my mother said, 'Son, for mine own part I have no further delight in any thing in this life. What I do here any longer, and to what end I am here, I know not, now that my hopes in this world are accomplished. One thing there was, for which I desired to linger for a while in this life, that I might see thee a Catholic Christian before I died. My God hath done this for me more abundantly, that I should now see thee withal, despising earthly happiness, become His servant: what do I here?'

"What answer I made her unto these things, I remember not. For scarce five days after, or not much more, she fell sick of a fever; and in that sickness one day she fell into a swoon, and was for a while withdrawn from these visible things. We hastened round her; but she was soon brought back to her senses; and looking on me and my brother standing by her, said to us enquiringly, 'Where was I?' And then looking fixedly on us, with grief amazed; 'Here,' saith she, 'shall you bury your mother.' I held my peace and refrained weeping; but my brother spake something, wishing for her, as the happier lot, that she might die, not in a strange place, but in her own land. Whereat she, with anxious look, checking him with her eyes, for that he still savoured such things, and then looking upon me; 'Behold,' saith she, 'what he saith:' and soon after to us both, 'Lay,' she saith, 'this body any where; let not the care for that any way disquiet you: this only I request, that you would remember me at the Lord's altar, wherever you be.' And having delivered this sentiment in what words she could, she held her peace, being exercised by her growing sickness.

"But I, considering Thy gifts, Thou unseen God, which Thou instillest into the hearts of Thy faithful ones, whence wondrous fruits do spring, did rejoice and give thanks to Thee, recalling what I before knew how careful and anxious she had ever been as to her place of burial, which she had provided and prepared for herself by the body of her husband. For because they had lived in great harmony together, she also wished (so little can the human mind embrace things divine) to have this addition to that happiness, and to have it remembered among men, that after her pilgrimage beyond the seas, what was earthly of this united pair had been permitted to be united beneath the same earth. But when this emptiness had through the fulness of Thy goodness begun to cease in her heart, I knew not, and rejoiced, admiring what she had so disclosed to me; though indeed in that our discourse also in the window, when she said, 'What do I here any longer?' there appeared no desire of dying in her own country. I heard afterwards also, that when we were now at Ostia, she, with a mother's confidence, when I was absent one day discoursed with certain of my friends about the contempt of this life, and the blessing of death; and when they were amazed at such courage which Thou hadst given to a woman, and asked, 'Whether she were not afraid to leave her body so far from her own city?' she replied, 'Nothing is far to God; nor was it to be feared lest at the end of the world He should not recognize whence He were to raise me up.' On the ninth day then of her sickness, and the fifty-sixth year of her age, and the three and thirtieth of mine, was that religious and holy soul freed from the body.

"I closed her eyes; and there flowed withal a mighty sorrow into my heart, which was overflowing

into tears; mine eyes at the same time, by the violent command of my mind, drank up their fountain wholly dry; and woe was me in such a strife! But when she breathed her last, the boy Adeodatus burst out into a loud lament; then, checked by us all, held his peace. In like manner also a childish feeling in me, which was, through my heart's youthful voice, finding its vent in weeping, was checked and silenced. For we thought it not fitting to solemnize that funeral with tearful lament and groanings: for thereby do they for the most part express grief for the departed, as though unhappy, or altogether dead; whereas she was neither unhappy in her death, nor altogether dead. Of this we were assured on good grounds, the testimony of her good conversation and her faith unfeigned.

"The corpse was carried to the burial: we went and returned without tears. For neither in those prayers which we poured forth unto Thee, when the sacrifice of our ransom was offered for her, when now the corpse was by the grave's side, as the manner there is, previous to its being laid therein, did I weep even during those prayers." [1]

It is singular that a critic should find in this tearlessness a proof of Augustine's comparative indifference to his mother's death. There is such a thing as a grief too deep for tears. And Augustine's own words suggest it:

"Yet was I the whole day in secret heavily sad, and with troubled mind prayed Thee, as I could to heal my sorrow, yet Thou didst not."

[1] *Conf.*, ix. 32.

But in the silence of that night, as Augustine lay awake, the words of Ambrose's hymn returned to mind:

"Creator of the earth and sky
Ruling the firmament on high,
Clothing the day with robes of light,
Blessing with gracious sleep the night.

"That rest may comfort weary men,
And brace to useful toil again,
And soothe awhile the harassed mind,
And sorrow's heavy load unbind." [1]

And then the sense of desolation came upon him: the wonderful mother and that love of which he felt suddenly deprived. And Augustine gave way to floods of tears, up to that moment restrained. He half apologizes for his emotion. Yet when he wrote the sentence: "The mother who was dead to mine eyes, who for many years had wept for me," [2] he had more than justified the depth of his own sorrow—if indeed such sorrow could ever stand in need of justification.

Monnica's words: "Lay this body any where. Let not care for it concern you," made a deep impression on her son.[3] "Care for the ceremonial of the grave," wrote Augustine in after years, "is rather a consolation of the living than an advantage to the dead. The costliest sepulchre will not profit the wicked, neither will it matter to the saintly whether he be assigned the poorest grave or none. The funeral of Dives with its numerous retinue of attendant slaves was an imposing sight in the eyes of men; but far more glorious before God was that illustrious company of angels assembled round the beggar's loathsome corpse, bearing him away to no marble tomb, but to Abraham's bosom." [4]

But, although strongly deprecating all extravagant

[1] Cf. *The English Hymnal*, 49.
[2] *Conf.*, ix. 33. [3] *Conf.*, ix. 27.
[4] *De Cura pro Mortuis*, 4, quoted also in the *De Civ. Dei.*

funeral pomp, Augustine would by no means consent that opinion should rush to the opposite extreme. Care for the dead is natural, and is due. The frame from which the personality has departed is by no means to be irreverently flung aside. Augustine would fully concur with the modern phrase "the dreadful dust that once was man."

It was Monnica's dying request that she might be remembered at the altar of God. She desired, in accordance with the Church's perpetual practice, that the Sacrifice of our Redemption should there be offered up for her. It is needless to say that the saintly mother's last petition was not neglected. Augustine's first care was that prayer should be offered for her soul.[1] She had said: "This only I ask of you, remember me at the Lord's Altar, wherever you be." And her son assures us that "the Sacrifice of our Redemption was offered in her behalf." [2] When Augustine wrote those words he had been many years a Bishop in the Church of Christ. Who can doubt that Monnica's son, as a priest, returned in part her love for him by the earnestness of his intercession for her?

> "We ought not to neglect supplications for the spirits of the dead. And that these prayers should be made for all in Christian and Catholic fellowship departed, even without the mention of their names, under a general commemoration the Church has charged herself with these, in order that those which lacked for these offices parents or sons or kindred or friends, may have the same afforded unto them by the one pious mother of us all." [3]

May she rest then in peace with the husband, before and after whom she had never any; whom she

[1] *Conf.*, ix. 11. [2] *Ibid.*, ix. 12. [3] *De Cura pro Mortuis*, vii.

> obeyed, with patience bringing forth fruit unto Thee, that she might win him also unto Thee. And inspire, O Lord my God, inspire Thy servants my brethren, Thy sons my masters, whom with voice, and heart, and pen I serve, that so many as shall read these Confessions, may at Thy Altar remember Monnica Thy handmaid, with Patricius, her sometime husband. . . . May they with devout affection remember my parents in this transitory light, my brethren under Thee our Father in our Catholic Mother, and my fellow citizens in that eternal Jerusalem, which Thy pilgrim people sigheth after from their Exodus, even unto their return thither. That so, my mother's last request of me, may through my confessions, more than through my prayers, be, through the prayers of many, more abundantly fulfilled to her.[1]

As to Visions of the dead returning to earth, Augustine does not encourage belief in their reality. If the souls of the dead really took part in the affairs of the living, and came to us in person while we sleep, then assuredly Monnica after her death would have reappeared to Augustine. "That mother who by land and sea followed me that she might live with me." The blessedness of a perfect lot elsewhere could never diminish her love for him. Heaven itself could not efface Augustine from her heart. The fact that she never returned was to him a proof that no such personal communion between the two worlds is permitted.[2]

A singular criticism has been passed upon this scene at Ostia. Willibald Herrmann, in his well-known work on "The Communion of the Christian with God," remarks on the absence of any reference to the Holy

[1] *Conf.*, ix. 13 (Hutching's translation).
[2] *De Cura pro Mortuis*, 16.

Trinity in Augustine's conversation with his mother. Herrmann accounts for this absence in the following way. "The reflective process which is necessary to any clear grasp of the idea of the Trinity ceases altogether in the moments of such religious exaltation. Augustine wrote a work of fifteen books on the Trinity, yet, when he stood with his mother at the window of the house at Ostia, and sought to express the profound sense he felt of being in the grasp of God, he spoke not of the Trinity, but of the one God, in whose presence the soul is lifted above itself and above all words and signs. A mystic who professes to hold the doctrine of the Trinity knows that all that can be said about it belongs to those words and signs which must shrink away back, along with the whole world, when God makes His presence felt." [1]

This criticism is based on a misapprehension. The conversation with Monnica was in the year 388. The great work upon the Holy Trinity was not begun before 400, and slowly matured into completeness during the next fifteen or twenty years. Is there any wonder that the devotional utterances of a neophyte, within a few months of his baptism, were still dominated by the philosophic conceptions with which his mind had been previously filled? Not even the intellect of an Augustine apprehended all at once the significance of the Trinitarian conception of Deity, or was able to make it the basis of his devotions. Matured reflection enabled him to see further than he said in those early days. Nor should it be forgotten that in a previous religious conversation, when Monnica spoke she breathed her devotional fervour in the words of a hymn to the Holy Trinity.

This criticism by Herrmann is repeated and endorsed in a Pantheistic interest by Radhakrisnan in his book on "The Hindu View of Life" (1927, p. 35). Thus con-

[1] *Communion with God* (English trans.), p. 29.

cerning Christian mystics he quotes approvingly the assertion that "whenever the religious feeling in them soars to its highest flights, then they are torn loose from Christ and float away in precisely the same realm with the non-Christian mystics of all ages."

But most emphatically that is not true of St. Augustine. His religious feeling at its highest cannot be called theocentric, as opposed to Christocentric. In the very crisis of intense religious feeling during his conversion, the appeal which came to him is "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." This conversation with his mother at Ostia does not represent deeper religious feeling than his experience at his conversion.

Montgomery in his edition of the Latin text of the Confessions says that "Christ is frequently named in the Confessions, and always with the profoundest reverence, but it is to the Father, not to the Son, that Augustine addresses his prayer." [1] Yet his address to the Father appeals "through the Manhood of Thy Son," [2] and speaks of "the humility of our Lord God descending to our pride," [3] and of "the Lord Jesus who is in the glory of the Father." [4]

It is therefore overwhelmingly clear that in Augustine's highest flights of devotion the Father and the Son are intimately associated on the levels of Deity, and that it is certainly not true that he at any rate was torn loose from Christ in his most exalted states of devotional experience. It is true that Augustine's general practice is to pray direct to the Father. None the less, he can say in the Confessions: "Jesus Christ, my helper and my redeemer." [5]

[1] p. xv. [2] i. 2. [3] i. 17. [4] vii. 14. [5] ix. 1.

CHAPTER XV

AUGUSTINE'S LAST YEAR IN ITALY

AFTER Monnica's death at Ostia it seems that Augustine returned to Rome. Various reasons have been given why he did not at once cross over to Africa. Perhaps Monnica's death had altered his plans. It seems strange that he should have come to the sea, and then turned back. Perhaps it was owing to the unsettled condition of the Empire. For the usurper Maximus was that year in occupation of Africa. And it may be, as the Benedictines thought, that Augustine felt it safer to take refuge in Rome.[1] These were very troubled times. Rome itself was not secure. For Maximus began invading Italy, and Ambrose was sent to meet him as ambassador, while the young Emperor Valentinian fled with his mother from Milan.

In the midst of all this confusion and insecurity a further trouble fell on Augustine. His friend Verecundus, to whose generosity he owed the quiet retreat at Cassiciacum, had viewed Augustine's conversion with mingled emotions. He was not a Christian, although he had married a Christian wife. He was indeed being drawn towards the Christian religion. But the form of Christian life which, under Augustine's inspiring influence, had captivated him was Monasticism, the very kind of life which his marriage made impossible. He viewed the Christian ideal as asceticism, and he would do all or nothing. Accordingly he halted on the brink of faith.

[1] *Vita*, ii. 8 (Gaume, p. 232).

Augustine urged him to become a Christian in the married state. A sudden and serious illness, however, determined his choice. While Augustine was at Rome, Verecundus was baptized at Milan, and died.[1] Augustine says that his friend was made a Christian, one of the faithful; that he had received the forgiveness of his sins. And he recalls with affection and gratitude the quiet days of his retreat, where from the fever of the world he had found rest in God, and says that his generous friend is now being rewarded in Paradise.

Augustine's return to Africa was delayed for almost another year. He remained in Italy; in all probability residing in Rome, where he resumed that amazing literary activity which continued undiminished for the following forty years.

His wonderfully active mind was engaged in vigorous discussion on the problem of the human will.[2] This discussion, held with his friend Evodius, forms part of the explanation of his own deliverance from Dualism, and was undoubtedly intended to promote the return to Catholicism of several companions whom his influence had led into the Manichæan religion. The difficulty in utilising this document to throw light on this stage of Augustine's development is, that only part of it was written in Rome. The remainder (especially Book III) was completed several years later, after his return to Africa. But if attention is confined to the earlier part (*i.e.* Books I and II), we shall probably not be far wrong in regarding them as indications of Augustine's state of mind in 388. The work begins in the form of a Dialogue with Evodius, but it ends as an instruction. The part of Evodius becomes less and less, until he subsides altogether, while the flow of Augustine's thought streams on uninterruptedly to its conclusion.

[1] *Conf.*, ix. 5, 6.

[2] *De Libero Arbitrio.*

The problem enunciated is, whether God is the author of evil.

In the first place, it becomes necessary to analyse *what evil is*. Evil is generally asserted to be of two kinds, what we do and what we suffer, or moral and physical evil. Now, as to the former: if goodness be an essential attribute of God, plainly moral evil cannot be derived from Him. And as to the latter: if righteousness be also His attribute, He will not only reward the good, but punish the wicked. Physical evil, therefore, does spring from God. Of moral evil, however, says Augustine, there is no one author to whom its existence can be ascribed. Every individual is the author of his own evil doings.

But if so, whence does evil come? That is the problem, says Augustine, which deeply perplexed him as a young man, and led him astray into non-Christian systems of thought, and entangled him in intricacies from which he would never have escaped if the divine help had not been given in response to his thirst for truth. He proposes now to explain the way in which he escaped from the doctrine of necessity. *The problem* may be stated as follows: If sins originate from the soul, and the soul from God, the conclusion would seem inevitable that sins originate from God.

In meeting this problem of evil, says Augustine, it is fundamentally important to start with a right conception of God. The noblest conception of God is the truest commencement of all religion.[1] Now, no man holds the noblest conception of God without acknowledging Him to be the unchanging Creator of all good, which, while He created, He transcends.

On the basis of that fundamental conception of God, we

[1] Optime namque de Deo existimare verissimum est pietatis exordium.

may advance to consider the problem, what is evil? Wherein does its essential nature lie?

It is quite inadequate to answer that what constitutes evil is the fact of prohibition by human law. For human law has at times forbidden what was perfectly right; as, for instance, when it prohibited belief in Christ. Nor would an evil thing cease to be what it is, however much human law might approve and permit it.

This statement is not intended to disparage human law. The law of the State may, indeed, ignore many things which the Providence of God will justly vindicate, yet the limitations of its range must not lead us to depreciate the good it accomplishes. Law places restraint on action and avenges wrong. It is exceedingly beneficial. But it varies with place and time, according to the exigencies of civil life.

In a word, its distinction is that it is *temporal*.[1] Beyond this rises law of another order. It is the expression of the highest reason. It has nothing to do with expediency. Its essential characteristic is that it cannot change. Its nature is *eternal*. From this eternal law all temporal law derives its sanction. The variations of earthly legislation are at best the application of eternal principles to changeful circumstances. The notion of eternal law is deeply imprinted on the human mind. This eternal moral order ought never to be transgressed. And the harmony of the individual life is secured by placing it under the eternal law's dominion. In that condition only can men be called truly wise. But, says Augustine, I think you are aware of the fact that the majority of men are fools.[2] Their foolishness consists in placing the mind under the dominion of impulse and inclination: which is a manifest reversal

[1] Cf. the theory of the State in the *De Civitate* and Figgis, *Lectures on the De Civitate*.

[2] Plerosque homines stultos esse.

of the true order of things. And that which enslaves us to inclination is the will. And that this self-chosen, self-fulfilled servitude should entail misery is only just.

Now, if the will obeys the eternal law, and puts that law before all temporal things, the consequence is goodness; and the reward of goodness is tranquillity, serene joy and peace, and the happiness which comes of resting in true and unchanging good.

But here it may be asked, If happiness depends upon the will, why is it that so many fail to reach what every man naturally wills to possess? The answer is, that although happiness is what all men wish to possess, they do not all will the means by which alone it can be attained. No man obtains happiness simply from the will to live happily, but from the will to live aright: which is precisely what the evil refuse to will. Now it is an eternal and immutable law that happiness and misery are respectively the reward and penalty which wait on exercise of the will. Men are made wretched by their own will: not because any man wills to be wretched, but because he remains in that condition of will which entails misery as its inevitable result. Accordingly, there is no contradiction in saying that every man wills to be happy, that happiness depends upon the will, and yet that few attain this happiness. For they must not only will the end, they must also will the means whereby that end is secured.

Our problem, then, is solved. Evil appears when things eternal are neglected and things temporal established in place of them. All sin consists in aversion from the divine and eternal, and perversion to the changeable and insecure. This thought was afterwards expressed in the celebrated sentence in the treatise on the City of God, where Augustine contrasts the love of the earthly to the exclusion of the heavenly with the love of the heavenly to the exclusion of the earthly.

The solution, however, of the question, What is evil? awakens another. For if evil consists in misdirected freedom, or in the substitution by the will of the temporal for the eternal, why was this freedom given? If man had never been endowed with free determination of the will, plainly it had been impossible for him to sin.

We may argue that the human will ought to be free, because otherwise it would be impossible to acquire merit. God did not bestow free will because it enabled a man to sin, but because without it man cannot do good. Accordingly, free will ought to be bestowed by God upon men.

"I grant you," replied Evodius, "that free will is a gift from God; but does it not seem to you that what is given for the purpose of doing right ought not to be convertible to the purpose of doing wrong?"

"Is it, then, permissible," Augustine asked, "to recognize free-will as a gift from God, and then to challenge the character of the gift?"

Evodius replied, "I grant what you say if you proceed on the ground of authority. But the present discussion is an endeavour to ascertain by reason what is already accepted by faith."

Three questions are to be determined. The first, how reason is convinced of the divine existence; the second, whether all things else, so far as they are good, proceed from Him; the third, whether free will is to be classified among things good.

1. First as to the existence of God. Here he starts with a personal inquiry, Are you sure that you yourself exist? Or do you think you may be deceived about it? But if you are deceived, you must exist else you could not be deceived. Existence is involved in the possibility of being deceived. Whether, then, you are deceived or not, at any rate you exist.

Now all being is of one of three kinds—existence, life, intelligence. A stone exists, a sheep lives, a man reasons. These are the three departments of being. They all concur in man. And the last is the greatest of the three.

As to this highest form of being, which is reason, the singularity of reason consists in the fact that the principles which the mind accepts are the same for all. With the bodily senses we all alike gaze upon one and the same orb of light. Every separate individual sees it independently, but that upon which our gaze converges is one. Now this physical fact is a parable of a still more striking intellectual fact beyond it. Each individual mind thinks and reasons for itself; but the principles upon which it reasons are the same for all. That is to say that separate individual minds converge upon one and the same central light of truth. For example, in arithmetical *numbers;* it is a truth that three and seven make ten. It is not only true now, but it always must be true. Augustine held that under no circumstances is it conceivable that they should be other than they are. They cannot be induced or persuaded into any sort of change under any pretext whatever. They possess the incorruptibility of truth. And every individual mind is compelled to recognize that this is so. The individual thinker does not make this to be true; he finds it, and assents to it, as already true; true independently of himself, objectively true.

Thus we are not to say that truth is purely subjective, your truth or my truth, not objective truth; as if there were no such thing as wisdom, but so many separate wisdoms as there are separate minds.

Is it not the case that certain things are common to all reflective minds, and can be denied by none? Consider general principles such as that inferior things are to be

less esteemed than superior, that the eternal is more than the temporal. Can any individual claim that such principles are *his* truth, or are they not common property of all who think?

Such a thing then exists as immutable truth: truth which is neither my truth nor your truth, but is the same for all who see correctly, is attainable by all, and offers itself to all alike. This immutable truth is the rule by which we judge of other things. We do not judge these principles. If we say that the eternal is more than the temporal, or that seven and three are ten, we do not say they ought to be, but simply that they are. Consequently, these truths transcend our minds. Our minds are mutable, but these truths are not.

Here, then, we have reached the conclusion that there is something more sublime than our reason.

And this transcendent truth is God, and our freedom consists in subjection to the truth. And the glory of this unchanging truth is shown in the fact that, unlike earthly possessions, it can be the common property of all, without depriving any of its entire and complete appropriation.

Augustine reminds Evodius of his promise to acknowledge as God that to which nothing else can be superior.[1] Evodius expresses his assent.

In whatever direction we may turn, the natural world, argues Augustine, manifests rhythm and order and number and proportion; these commend themselves to you because you already possess within your mind the law of number and proportion, by which you measure the beauty or order of the external world. Look where you will, heaven, earth and seas all exhibit an intellectual harmony. They not only exist, but can be interpreted in terms of intelligence. The movements of the world are rhythmical, harmonious. All human art proceeds on laws and

[1] Cf. St. Anselm, " id quo nihil majus concipi potest."

principles by which men make whatever they can make. Thus, in the concrete world, wisdom shines out upon us from its secret abode.

Hereupon Augustine breaks out into rapturous address to Deity: "Alas for those who take Thee not as guide, who wander amid the indications of Thee, and love Thy signs instead of Thee! Alas for those who turn themselves away from Thy light, and cling lovingly to their own obscurity!"

2. The existence of God being therefore regarded as an intellectual necessity, Augustine advances to the second inquiry; whether all things, so far as they are good, proceed from God. This inquiry is now readily solved. All mutable beings depend upon that which gives them form. For nothing can form itself. They are the mutable products of something in itself immutable. Then mutable products may be classified in the ascending scale of existence, life, intelligence: all which must proceed from God. All beings, therefore, so far as they are good proceed from God.

3. A third inquiry remains: whether free will is to be accounted among things good. For certainly, if that be so, it is a gift of God. Recall the position achieved: God exists; all good things owe their origin to Him. Now good things may be considered as greater and lesser good. The eye is good, yet character may be formed without it. But without the will no character can be formed. Thus the former is a minor good, the latter a greater good. Now if God is the Author of that lesser good, without which, nevertheless, men can live aright, can He be doubted to be the Author of that greater good without which it is impossible to live aright?

"Well," persists Evodius, "prove that free will is good, and I will grant that it is a divine gift."

Augustine answers: "Which is the better element in

human nature? that without which a man can live aright, or that without which he cannot live aright?"

"Undoubtedly," replies Evodius, "the latter."

"Well then," answers Augustine, "he can live aright without one of his bodily senses. Yet you call that sense a good. But he cannot live aright without free will. How, then, can you hesitate to acknowledge its excellence?"

The will is a sort of intermediate good. It is good when it adheres to the unchanging Good. But when it turns away from the unchanging Good to its own personal and inferior good it sins.

And this shows the source from which this turning away proceeds. It cannot proceed from God, for it is the turning away of the will from God. This turning away is voluntary: it is in our own power.

Evodius was Augustine's constant companion during his last year in Rome (388). And the work on Freedom of the Will was not the only outcome of their discussions. There is also their dialogue concerning the soul.

Evodius appears to think that the soul assumes the same figure as the body. And he intends to ask at the proper time—which, however, does not come—whether the soul retains the figure of the body when it departs from the body at death. Thus, in Evodius' view, the soul seems to be an etherealized body, a shadow the same in form though not in quality.

Sometimes he thinks that the soul is not in the body at all. In which case he really does not know where he is. Accordingly, he produces an illustration from animal life. He relates that boys amused themselves by cutting off the tails of lizards and watching the amputated tails still move about. Was the soul of the lizard in the separated tail as well as in the beast's body? How could there be movement if there were no soul? Augustine suggests that air and heat may be a possible explanation. But he caps

Evodius's report by a still more striking case. Quite lately, while he was in Liguria with his pupils and his companion Alypius, they found what we should call a centipede, or, as Augustine calls it, a multipede. They cut it in two. Both parts moved. They continued the process of vivisection, and cut the creature into numerous parts. And all the parts moved about. Here was a crowd of worms instead of one. Augustine was astounded. Had it not been for previous knowledge and reflection, he must have inferred that the soul itself is a body, and capable of subdivision. He warns Evodius with much earnestness to approach this subject with a firm belief in the divine origin of the human soul. Otherwise he will be misled by appearances through over-reliance on the evidence of the senses. "For look you," says Augustine, "in the case of this particular insect phenomenon—the vivisection of the multipede, and the vivacity of its severed parts—we ought not to allow it to disturb us; because there are many facts whose causes are concealed from us, or which we are not competent to explain. Are we to abandon what we have elsewhere ascertained and acknowledge to be most true, merely on the ground of another phenomenon for which we cannot account? We need not allow our belief in the nature of the soul to depend on the vitality of a vivisected worm. We are certainly not compelled to conclude that because the severed fragments of a worm can move, therefore the human soul can be cut into sections like the body of the worm." Augustine feels strongly that the intellectual reasons for belief in the spirituality of man's higher nature outweigh this unsolved problem of insect existence.

This discussion concerning the soul was never finished. As conversation advanced, the form of dialogue ceased. Evodius is silent and Augustine holds the field. The conclusion is extremely interesting and important as an

indication of Augustine's development. It is a meditation on the conditions required for discovering truth and the various stages of the soul's approach to God. Augustine lays stress on the necessity of cleansing the soul from moral imperfections. He uses the well-known mystic term *purgatio* to describe it. This is the stage of faith, but not of sight. The vision of truth is not granted until the soul is thoroughly purified.[1] After the period of purgation comes the *contemplation* of truth. All this is divinely assisted in response to the prayer, "Renew a right spirit within me." And if we follow this vision of the truth, it leads us, through the power and wisdom of God, to the supreme cause, supreme author, supreme principle of all things, or by whatever other more appropriate name it should be called.

"Then," says Augustine, "we shall realize that all things are created by God, and in comparison with Him are nothing, although, considered by themselves, they are wonderful and beautiful."

And then he adds, insisting on the harmony between authority and reason (the two ways of arriving at the truth), "We shall realize how true that Faith was in which we were brought up by our Mother the Church. We shall regard the Resurrection of the Flesh, which is sometimes reluctantly believed and sometimes not at all, as so certain that we shall not think it more certain that the sun will rise to-morrow. And as for those who ridicule the Incarnation of the Son of God and the Virgin Birth, we shall make no more account of them than of boys who, when they see an artist beginning to paint disbelieve in his capacity, unless they are shown some other picture which he has already finished."

It should here be noted that whatever influence Neo-

[1] Nam videre hoc utrum sit verum, non nisi perpurgatae animae licet. *De Quantitatae Animae*, 73.

platonist philosophy continued to exert over Augustine's mind, he not only felt profoundly the reality of the Church's faith, and insisted on the authority of the Church as being in harmony with reason; but also definitely affirmed his conviction that the particular doctrines of the Incarnation, Virgin Birth and Resurrection of the Flesh were true.

Moreover, he went on to add that the Faith of the Church was the true, the perfect, and the only religion whereby reconciliation of the soul with God could be attained. And then he expressed his sense of moral peace by declaring that in this service is perfect freedom. By this reconciliation he is profoundly conscious that God and the soul are brought into unity.

Among Augustine's early productions as a Catholic are also two pamphlets, on the Morals of the Catholic Church, and the Morals of the Manichæans; in these he sets in the strongest contrast the characteristics of the two religions. They were written in the hour of reaction. The rhetorician still predominates. But they present an extraordinarily vivid picture; the outcome on the one side of a lengthy personal experience, on the other of the fascination exerted over Augustine's heart by the Church's sanctity.

The Morals of the Catholic Church[1] are traced to their ultimate foundation. Although the true method of instruction is by authority rather than reason, since the learner must first accept on the teacher's assertion what he afterwards may verify; yet, in deference to Manichæan repugnance to authority, Augustine affirms his willingness to proceed on a method which he thinks mistaken, and to begin with argument.

In the book on the Morals of the Catholic Church, Augustine discusses the nature of happiness. Happiness

[1] Written in the beginning of 388, publ. ? in 389 (Benedictine Note, i. 1113).

consists in the possession of man's chief good. This chief good has two characteristics. First, it is that than which there is nothing better, the enjoyment of that, whatever it is, which is best. And secondly, it must be something which cannot be lost against man's will. Man consists of body and soul. The chief good of the body is the soul. And the chief good of the soul is something superior to itself. Now what gives perfection to the soul is virtue. But virtue is to be obtained by following after God. The possession of God is man's chief good, and in that possession consists man's happiness.

Christ teaches that God is to be loved with all the heart and all the mind. And in this doctrine of the chief good both New Testament and Old Testament agree, in spite of Manichæan criticism that the God of the Old Testament is not the God of the New. Augustine does not hesitate to characterize the Manichæan theory of two divinities by such terms as "silly and profane."

> "To follow after God is the desire of happiness: to reach God is happiness itself. We follow after God by loving Him: we reach Him, not by becoming entirely what He is, but in nearness to Him, and in wonderful and immaterial contact with Him, and in being inwardly illuminated and occupied by His truth and holiness."

This is the supreme good: because since nothing can separate us from it, it cannot be lost against our will.[1]

This treatise shows Augustine's progress in apprehension of Christian conception of God. No other creature beyond ourselves can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Moreover, Augustine here quotes, I think for the first time, the

[1] Cf. Rom. viii. 38, 39.

Pauline doctrine of grace, which afterwards became one of the most characteristic ruling principles of his teaching: "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." [1]

And here Augustine brings in the doctrine of the Trinity. "We ought then to love God, the Trinity in Unity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

We find in this treatise on Morals in the Catholic Church that profuseness of quotation from Scripture which, from this period onward, is so marked a quality of all Augustine's writings. The whole range of the sacred books is called into requisition.

He appeals, with all the fervour of one who has at last found priceless treasure, to his former Manichæan associates; not always, it must be confessed, in terms likely to persuade or convince; but in the strong assurance that the Christian faith which is the secret of happiness does not exist among the Manichæans, nor anywhere but in the Catholic teaching. "Do you listen," he pleads, "to the learned men of the Catholic Church with as peaceable a disposition, and with the same zeal, that I had when for nine years I attended on you; and there will be no need of so long a time as that during which you made a fool of me."

Wherein, then, does human happiness consist? Manifestly, in the enjoyment of man's highest good. Man's highest good must evidently satisfy two conditions: it must be that which is best; and that which none can lose against his will. These conditions are alone fulfilled in God. God is man's highest good. The search for God is the pursuit of happiness: the finding Him is happiness. He fulfils the two conditions of the highest good. Nothing is better than God, and He cannot be lost against our will. He is found by love. Nothing can separate us from God

[1] Rom. v. 5.

if we love Him. Hell has no existence for him who loves God. Morality is founded in love towards God, as an analysis of the four cardinal virtues shows. Temperance, fortitude, justice, prudence, are really four aspects of love. Temperance is love keeping itself entire and incorrupt for God; fortitude is love bearing everything readily for God's sake; justice is love serving God alone, and therefore ruling all things human well; prudence is love discriminating those things which aid its progress towards God from those which aid it not. Thus the secret of human happiness consists in loving God with all the heart and mind and will. And our duty to man flows as a natural result of our duty to God. For the cause of all social evil is perverted self-love. Only by love of God is self-love truly directed and controlled. Hence we are bidden to love our neighbour as ourself. Now we do not love our neighbour as ourself unless we strive to lead him towards that highest good to which our own aspirations are directed. Thus philanthropy is founded on religion.

Augustine proceeds to maintain that love of God includes love of self and love of humanity. For it is impossible for one who loves God not to love himself. For he who aims diligently at the attainment of the chief and true good has a proper love for self. And the love of God must also include philanthropy. For there is no surer advance toward the love of God than the love of our fellow men. And here the appropriateness of Christ's second precept is evident: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Augustine holds that, while the love of God is first in beginning, the love of our neighbour is first in reaching perfection. He says this on the principle that we reach perfection more easily in lower things. But he instantly adds the reflection that love of humanity is by no means an easy matter. It requires a kindheartedness, consideration, thoughtfulness, which belong only to those

to whom it is given by Him who is the Giver of all goodness.

Augustine acknowledges that his former associates would agree with him about the obligation to love God and to love our neighbour. Where they differed was that they denied, while he affirmed, that this doctrine could be found in the Old Testament. Accordingly, he points out that this is Christ's summary of the ancient law, and that the Gospel sentence is a quotation from Moses. Did not Christ say that "on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets"? [1]

The great convert's exultation and fervour broke out in rapturous eloquence addressed to the Catholic Church. He places on record his admiration for the solitaries of the ascetic life, and for the religious communities. He has been deeply impressed, even fascinated, by the mighty influence which this ideal of unworldliness exerted in Egypt and the East. The communities of men and of women, far away from the great centres of population; the life of the Catholic clergy in the world, which seems to him still more worthy of commendation, because it is harder to maintain a high level amid the manifold varieties of men than it is apart from the throng.

Then also he speaks in glowing terms of community life lived in cities. He had witnessed them in Milan and again in Rome. What further impressed him was that the community life admitted an element of individual independence, "No one is pressed to endure hardships for which he is unfit: nothing is imposed on any one against his will; nor is he condemned by the rest because he confesses himself too feeble to imitate them; for they bear in mind how strongly Scripture enjoins charity on all."

At the same time, Augustine is well aware of the inconsistencies and unworthiness of Christians. He knows that

[1] St. Matt. xxii. 40.

" there are many who have renounced the world in words, and yet long to be burdened by worldly things and rejoice in such burdens. But the existence of these blemishes is no wonder among so vast a multitude.

> " Do not summon against me men who cling to the Christian name while they neither exhibit nor understand the force of that profession. Do not *search out* the crowd of the ignorant who, even in the true religion, are misled by superstitions or enslaved by passions, and forgetful of the vows which they have undertaken. I know that there are many adorers of graves and pictures. I know that there are many who are drunken at funerals, and bury themselves in sin upon the very graves of the dead, and yet attempt to cover their wretchedness with the sanctions of religion. I know that there are many persons who, as far as words go, have renounced this world, who nevertheless desire to be laden with worldly things, and rejoice to bear such burdens. That such defects should exist in the vast throngs of adherents to the faith is, after all, not altogether surprising. But these are tares among the wheat whom the Catholic Church herself condemns and daily labours to correct. They may regain by repentance what they had lost by sin."[1]

Augustine supplemented his tract on the Morals of the Catholic Church with a sketch of *Manichæan Morality*. He writes as one disillusioned by experience. Their practical failures are traced to the fundamental theoretic blunder of regarding evil as a substance, not an action of the will. Conceptions so essentially erroneous could not produce the highest fruit. In this attack Augustine writes with great severity; but experience convinced him of the

[1] Substance of Chap. 75.

incapacity of Dualism to create such moral types as abounded in Christianity. Tested by its fruits, as a regenerating influence in human life, Christianity had no rivals. Love alone could produce these sacrifices. And Christianity elicited love as no other religion could.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RETURN TO AFRICA

AUGUSTINE'S longing to get back to his own land was at last realized, in the autumn of 388. The victory of Theodosius over the usurper Maximus had restored the Empire to comparative peace. Augustine returned a very different man from the self-willed and restless student who abandoned his mother and fled across the sea to Italy. He returned with his son, Adeodatus, and his friend Alypius.

The return to Africa evidently made a powerful impression on Augustine's heart. Not that the years of absence had wrought much outward change in the condition of the old familiar places. But an immeasurable change had been wrought within. He gazed on the well-known haunts with other eyes. It was impossible for the man, now sobered and enlightened, to pass without profound emotion the chapel of Cyprian, where Monnica knelt and prayed in that night when her son deserted her and fled; impossible now to move again without humiliating thoughts in the streets of Carthage, which awakened at every turn regrettable memories of wild incidents in the student days. The Augustine who had left Africa was not the Augustine who returned. Years later he will speak of that impressive contrast in a sermon in that very city. (Alii ivimus et alii redivimus.)[1] But he must have felt it keenly in the day of his return.

This time Augustine's stay in Carthage was brief. He

[1] *Enarr.* 12, Psalm 36, Serm. 3, 20.

paid a visit to former friends, witnessed the wonderful restoration to health of a former companion, Innocent, and then retired to his native town and settled at Tagaste.[1]

Here Augustine fulfilled the dream of years. He laid the foundations of a religious community. The social teachings of the Sermon on the Mount had impressed him long before. During his stay in Italy he had seen for himself the community house, near Milan, under St. Ambrose's direction, and it helped to influence his conversion.

In the contrast which he drew between Manichæan and Catholic ethics he bestows the most fervid and eloquent panegyrics on the various austere and devoted forms of Eastern monastic life. And he now longed to introduce into Africa the system of religious brotherhoods already widely prevalent in Christendom. Above all, he desired the community life for his own spiritual development. He had now no worldly ambitions. He shunned with a positive aversion, almost amounting to terror, the duties of the priesthood. Like many of the most devout of his age, he avoided it as an almost intolerable responsibility. He simply desired to spend his life in a community of like-minded souls, devoting himself to good works, to the training of other men, and to his own personal growth in grace.

Accordingly, one of his first acts at Tagaste was to sell a portion of the small estate inherited from his father, and to distribute the proceeds to the Church and to the poor, reserving a house in which his community might live and, presumably, means to maintain them. The counsel given to the rich young man in the Gospel had long since forcibly appealed to his generous nature. He mentions it in his Confessions, and returns to it in his

[2] *De Civ. Dei*, xii. 8, 3.

letters.[1] By the help of God, he says, he had obeyed it literally. Not indeed that he was ever rich; but neither were the Apostles, who gave up all to follow their Lord. A man is judged by what he has, and not by what he has not. Indeed to resign all one has, and all one hopes to have, is to surrender all the world.

The people of Tagaste watched the formation of the community with sympathy. The first members of the brotherhood were Augustine and his son Adeodatus, together with his friends Alypius and Evodius, who returned to Africa with him. They were speedily joined by other friends and citizens of Tagaste. So the brotherhood grew.

Soon after settling at Tagaste, he wrote out a discussion with Adeodatus. This dialogue [2] between Augustine and his son is concerned with the use of words as signs for the communication of truth. There is the sign and the thing signified. Words are intended to convey ideas. But the ideas are not simply learnt from the signs. The words may be heard while the idea is not realized.

The thing signified is the all-important matter, not the sign. The value of the words is that they aid us to seek the reality. Signs impress themselves upon our senses from without, conveying impressions to the inner man. But there is also a teacher within. The teacher of the inner man is Christ. Augustine is referring to Ephes. iii. 16, 17: "Strengthened through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." For Christ is the power of God and the eternal Wisdom, on whom every rational soul depends. Everything depends on the teacher of the inner man. In the sphere of mental conceptions we behold ideas in the inner light of truth by which the inner man is enlightened. My hearer, therefore, understands what I say not from

[1] *Ep.*, clvii. to Hilary. [2] *De Magistro.*

my words, but from his own inner contemplation. If I speak what is true, it is not I who teach him who contemplates the Truth. He is not taught by my words, but by the realities themselves made clear to him increasedly through the light which God bestows. Thus, he may indeed reply to my questionings, but the conclusions at which he arrives are already there within his mind, although he may actually have contradicted or not realized them. His infirmity disabled him from appreciating the light which was within him. If a man says to his teacher, I know because you have taught me, the answer is, What if I taught you something which you are persuaded is sheer fiction? Would my words in that case make you as certain as you are about what you recognize as true? Clearly, then, you have not simply learnt from what I taught you, but from the light within. Accordingly, the conclusion is that, useful as are the outward signs for our communication of ideas, yet we must not assign too high a value to them, nor credit them with achieving what is in reality beyond their power. And above all things that the real Master and Teacher is Christ, who teaches us by the light within. Turning, therefore, to Him we are enlightened.

These were among the last ideas that Augustine impressed upon his son. All we know further is that the lad, now in his seventeenth year, and endowed with remarkable ability and great promise, was soon afterwards taken ill and died. Not a word remains to describe Augustine's grief.

> "Him evermore a shadow overhung,
> Not of the great Numidian forests born,
> The prophecy of genius that dies young,
> The far cloud-film of a too-radiant morn.
> Ah! they who early pass through one dark gate
> Have looks like Thine, thou young Adeodate." [1]

[1] Abp. Alexander.

The next three years were spent in seclusion and in study of Holy Scripture and of Catholic doctrine and of the great writers of the Church, chiefly St. Ambrose and St. Cyprian, whom Augustine held in special veneration.

Much time was spent in the community in conference and discussion. A great variety of inquiries were introduced, on metaphysical and theological subjects, and Augustine's answers were noted down, and afterwards collected into a volume called The Eighty-Three Questions. Although it cannot be ascertained with complete assurance what proportion of these inquiries strictly belong to the period at Tagaste, and what to that at Hippo, still a tolerably accurate impression may be gathered as to the general nature of the themes discussed.

The thoughts of the community were directed to subjects such as these: the superiority of man over the beasts shown in the power of dominion, which is in no solitary instance reversed; on the Cross of Christ, as removing the fear of death; on the classification of sins into sins of infirmity, sins of ignorance, sins of malice; opposed respectively to strength and wisdom and goodness. It is instructive to notice that in Latin, as in English, the word love had become so degraded by counterfeits that Augustine urges the advisability of substituting for it the word charity when reference is made to the highest of Christian graces.

The Platonic theory of ideas, or the eternal counterparts of created things pre-existing in the divine intelligence, a theory which enters so largely into Augustine's theology, was expounded to the community at Tagaste. There is nothing irrational in creation. Every created thing is formed after the divine pattern of it, in accordance with its own reasons. Where did these reasons exist, unless in the mind of the Creator? But that which exists in the divine mind is eternal.

Augustine's intellectual difficulties would naturally lead to discussion on the assent of the mind to various orders of truth. Accordingly, we find a note on things credible. The classes of credible things are said to be three. First, those that must always be believed and can never be demonstrated, such as historical facts. Secondly, those which can be immediately demonstrated, as mathematics. Thirdly, those which must first be believed in order that afterwards they may be understood, such as divine revelations, which can only be understood by the pure in heart.

Another question was, What is meant by saying that man was made in the image of God? The answer given is that, in a sense, everything may be said to have been created in the image of God. That which only exists—the material earth, the human body—is like God to the extent that it shares existence. That which lives—the animal—is still more like God, in virtue of the fact that, like Him, it possesses life. That which is rational is still more closely in resemblance, because He is the Eternal Wisdom.

The expositions of Scripture which issue from the house at Tagaste are full of that delight in numerical symbolism and allegorical treatment which Augustine had learned from St. Ambrose. Some of these expositions are forced and strange, but others are of undeniable depth and beauty.

The problem of election already finds a place among these early questionings. We have here in the brotherhood anticipations of the great predestinarian conflict which will occupy Augustine's later years. Already the thought is expressed that those who come to God cannot come unless they are called. Vocation precedes merit. If a man ascribes to himself the fact that he responded to God when called, at any rate he cannot ascribe it to himself that he was called.

Augustine also discusses the relation between the human and the divine in the Incarnation of the Son of God. Relation between two elements may be of various kinds. First that the one element, itself remaining unchanged, changes the other into itself; just as wisdom converts the foolish into the wise, but is not itself subject to alteration. Secondly, when one element both changes the other, and itself is changed; as in the case of food. Thirdly, when the one element is conformed to the other; as a robe takes the form of the wearer, but retains that form no longer when laid aside. Fourthly, when neither elements change, as when a ring is worn on the finger.

Of these various types of relationship Augustine thinks that the third best illustrates the Incarnation. For the human nature is so assumed by the divine as to be formed by it, so that the inferior is conformed to the higher nature, as the robe is conformed to the wearer.

The discussions contain also a singularly luminous reconciliation of St. Paul and St. James on faith and works, the key to the problem being that St. Paul is speaking of good works done before justification, while St. James is concerned with those that follow.

It is, of course, quite natural that in after years, when Augustine passed these early discussions in review, he found in them points to modify, and referred to other writings, in which the subjects were better treated.[1] But they show in general the characteristic features of his mind and the range of thought in the conferences in the religious house at Tagaste.

Augustine was also engaged, as was natural after his own deliverance from Manichæan theories, in solving for others the hindrances to faith. The ridicule heaped by Manichæans on the opening chapter of Genesis had seriously obstructed his own conversion. A literal inter-

[1] *Retract.* i. xxvi.

pretation would involve endless controversy with the men whom he desired to aid, besides being a task beyond his present powers; although he did not doubt its possibility. He believed it therefore wiser, in the interests of edification, to employ the allegorical method of exegesis which he found so helpful when a hearer of the sermons of Ambrose at Milan, A.D. 389.

Accordingly, he allegorized the narrative in a sort of commentary on Genesis.[1] This effectually lessened the force of the Manichæan objections. They inquired if, in the beginning, God made the heavens and the earth, what He was doing before He made them. They wanted to know what motive could have prompted creation. To which Augustine replied that God created because He willed to create. To ask why He made them, is to ask for a cause of the Will of God. But there is nothing antecedent to divine Will. It may be noticed here that this erection of will into the supreme position, rather than love, is a view which had immense influence on Augustine's later thought when he came to the subject of predestination. To regard will rather than goodness as the ultimate explanation of existence may easily lead to belief in arbitrary decisions.

Among other objections raised against the Genesis account, the Manichæans asked whether God was in the dark until He created the light, and why the Almighty created so many sorts of beasts and insects which, so far from being any use to man, were positively injurious. Augustine's reply was that men criticize the Almighty with a boldness upon which they do not venture when criticizing a human masterpiece. They are content to believe that there may be a use in mechanisms which they do not understand. Why can they not exercise a similar deference and self-distrust when contemplating the work

[1] *De Genesi c. Manich.*

of God? Augustine frankly says he does not understand. But, as he most profoundly says, the completeness of the universe is greater than the needs of mankind. The service of man is not the sole purpose of the material creation. Many created things are not necessary to us, which yet may well have their place in the universal order and harmony. And he gives the critic the practical advice to avail himself of the useful, to avoid the pernicious, and to leave the superfluous. Also, through the order of the universe let him perceive the intelligence to which it witnesses.

It may be questioned whether Augustine, in his clear perception that the service of man is not the sole purpose of the material creation, has not taken a broader line than many Christian apologists of a far later period.

Further knowledge of Augustine's mind during this period after his return to Africa can be gathered from the books which he wrote concerning harmony.[1] The subject is rhythm, metre and verse. It was composed apparently for the instruction of his pupil Licentius, son of Romanian. It is a remarkable analysis of the various possibilities in poetical expression. Much of it was written probably in Italy. But the work was finished at Tagaste. It is significant that whereas the illustrations in the earlier part are taken from classical poetry—Terence, Horace, Virgil, in the concluding book what is running in his mind all through is a hymn of Ambrose. The change of atmosphere is remarkable. Here, for the first time in Augustine's writings, is found the doctrine of the Fall of Man, almost certainly derived from Ambrose's teaching. The idea of human nature degenerating ("in deterius commutatum") by the action of sin, the subjugation of humanity to corruption and death, forms now part of Augustine's belief. And here appears also the antithesis

[1] *De Musica.*

to human frailty, the divinely chosen method of Redemption. The divine Wisdom, by a sacrament of amazing and ineffable condescension, assumes the sinner's state without being contaminated by the sinner's sin. He willed to be born as man and to suffer and to die. It is a revelation of surpassing goodness. It leaves no room for our human pride. Evidently the doctrine of the Incarnation was taking fuller possession of the great convert's mind. Its unutterable glory was becoming plain to him.

Here also we encounter the thought that if the soul is perverted from its Master, who is God, to its servant, which is the body, with its passions and desires, of necessity it deteriorates. When converted from its servant to its Master, by the same necessity it improves. The former is an inversion of the natural order and proper destiny. The soul should rule its inferior and be ruled by its superior. That superior is God. Here, too, we read of the great Christian idea of Resurrection.

Here, too, we find Augustine quoting St. Paul's language in the cry for supernatural strength, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" quoted with its answer: "The Grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Certainly no language in the Christian sacred writings could more fully represent Augustine's own experience. And it is instructive to find him deliberately appropriating, not only the human cry, but also the divine response to it.

Already he grasps that the duty of man consists in loving God with all his faculties of heart and soul and mind, and his neighbour as himself. He realizes that if the actions of man were directed to this end, he would assuredly be cleansed.

And so Augustine was led to reflect, Which is easier: the love of things imperfect, or the love of God who is

perfection? Yet Christ declares that His yoke is light. We know also by experience that the love of this world is heavier. For what the soul seeks in its love of the world is permanence and eternity, which cannot be found there. As Christ has taught us what we ought to love, so His Apostle St. John, what we ought not to love. And Augustine has already learnt and quotes the unearthly sentence, "Love not the world"; for the world consists in the desire of the flesh, and the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life.

And, finally, here also we find in the last sentences of this treatise on rhythm a reference to the "consubstantial and unchanging Trinity, One God Supreme, of whom are all things, through whom are all things, and in whom are all things," as the object of faith, and hope, and love.

Certainly in all this there is great progress on the doctrines of the period of retreat.

CHAPTER XVII

THE VALUE OF FAITH

THE degree in which Augustine's conversion was promoted by faith has been obvious all through the process of his development. Fairly frequent references to the subject recur in the dialogues during his retreat. After his return to Africa he composed, for the enlightenment of a friend, an account of his ideas *concerning the value of faith* in acquiring religious truth.[1] The purpose of this treatise was to persuade his friend, Honoratus, whom he had led into Dualism, of the immense superiority of the Catholic religion. But, incidentally, the book contains an analysis of the place occupied by faith in his own conversion. It is anything rather than an abstract discussion of principles. It is a personal record of the process in his own experience. And therefore it greatly enriches our knowledge about his religious growth. It is an argument which tends to be autobiographical.

The discovery of truth has been, he says, the passion of his youth. The deceptions and the difficulties he knew by experience only too well. Reality is far from the minds of those who perceive nothing beyond the evidence of their five senses. What led him formerly astray into the Dualism of the religion of Manes was their claim to bring men to the knowledge of God by intellectual discussion, without making any demands on faith. That claim was naturally attractive to him in early manhood, in an arrogant, argumentative age, and in the intel-

[1] *De Utilitate Credendi.* Cf. Batiffol, *Catholicisme de S. Aug.*, i. 12.

lectualism of a University. It induced him to forsake the religion of his childhood, and to follow that other religion for nine years. But he found that the advocates of reason who excluded faith were far more capable in critical and destructive endeavours than in positive and constructive work. He came gradually to realize by experience the limitations of human reason.

With regard to the Old Testament Scriptures, which were so sharply criticized by the Manichæans, and had proved a serious obstacle to his own conversion, Augustine came to realize that there were various methods of interpretation, one of which was the allegorical. He came to see that his attitude towards the sacred books of the Church had been characterized by amazing temerity. For no procedure could possibly be more rash than to abandon the professed disciples and exponents of these books, and to accept the exposition of men professedly opposed to them. Who would take an exposition of Aristotle from a professor of a hostile school? We need a master to enable us to appreciate any literature. And it is undeniable that many a soul is sunk in ignorance and folly.

Imagine then ourselves, said Augustine, to be in the position of seekers after truth, and to have received no instructions whatever in religion. Our first step should surely be to seek a teacher. We find ourselves confronted by a bewildering variety of claimants. But in the midst of this confusion we discover one religion which is really universal. It is in almost world-wide possession. Surely, then, our first course will be to listen to the exponents of this religion; for if we are in error, at least we shall be in error with the human race. Let us begin, then, with the teaching of the majority. Universality is one of the tests of truth.

To this principle the objection will undoubtedly be

raised that truth is not the property of the many, but of the few. Augustine replied, "You already know, then, what is the truth, if you know where it is to be found. But we have started on the assumption that you do not know. Moreover, if you conjecture from the nature of truth that few people possess it, still you do not know who the few possessors are. But grant that truth is the possession of the few. Then the authority of the few must instruct the many. It is so in ordinary matters: why should it not be so in religion?"

"Suppose a man persists in objecting to this, and declines to submit himself to a teacher. Suppose the objector to assert that he will exercise his independent rights as an individualist: he will judge the sacred writings for himself."

Augustine replied: "You learn to estimate poetry from its expert critics. You do not presume to criticize without an instructor. Do you think yourself qualified to appreciate the value of the sacred books without any expert help?" ("Sine duce irruis, et de his sine preceptore audes ferre sententiam.")

"And yet unfavourable criticism may be due to moral imperfection, or to lack of spiritual insight. You should therefore seek an expert. If you say, he is not easily found, you must spend time, trouble, money, to obtain such. You must travel where such help can be found." Augustine contended that, on the grounds already given, we are justified in hearing first of all the exponents of the Catholic religion: because this represents the overwhelming majority.

At this point the argument becomes again autobiographical. Augustine recalls the period of his disillusionment after the interview with Faustus. He had crossed the Mediterranean from Africa to Italy, alternating between misgivings whether truth were ascertainable,

and a conviction that the human mind was too wonderful to be entirely incompetent to ascertain the truth, if only it were led by faith in some divine authority. And here he relates how he prayed for help; how he was assisted by the allegorical expositions of Ambrose; how he came to be in a teachable frame of mind, and yielded himself to the instructions of the Church, until he should either find what he sought, or else become convinced that search was unavailing.

Augustine knew, only too well, from his earlier experience, that this advice to hear the Church will sound very objectionable to his correspondent. What else is it, he will say, than the common claims of every sect that it holds and teaches truth?

"True," replied Augustine, "every heresy makes this claim. But the distinction lies in this: that other teachers profess to require allegiance to nothing which they cannot prove, and condemn the Catholic Church because it makes demands on faith."

"Well," answered the objector, "what could you say more strongly to their credit?"

"Not so," Augustine replied. "They promise what is very seductive to the natural man. But they promise what they are unable to perform. They do not realize the weakness of their powers. The claim to found religion on reason without faith is deceptive and disastrous."

Augustine came to see by personal experience that the principles of true religion must first be accepted by faith, and afterwards known by experience. Authority, and its correlative faith, must precede the personal apprehension of religious truth.

The proof of this chronological priority of faith to reason is found apart from religion, in the common experiences of ordinary life. Faith must not be dis-

paraged as if it were the same thing as credulity. Credulity is the excess of a quality which in itself is good. For in ordinary life faith is indispensable. All friendship is founded on faith. If faith were inadmissible, friendship would be impossible.

"Well," replied the critic, "faith may be inevitable in common affairs. That does not prove that it is essential in religion. Surely it would be better to satisfy my reason than to demand my faith."

Augustine answered, "Perhaps it would be so. But remember the transcendent greatness of the Deity. Do you suppose all men are capable of ascertaining God by reasonings? Are the capable the many or the few? Are you one of the capable? Modesty compels the answer that it is not for you to say. But grant that you are one of the capable and gifted few. How are the majority to reach the truth? They must come to it by faith. Moreover," added Augustine, "the intellectual few simply crawl upon the ground in their search for truth unless God enlightens them."

What fortifies this argument (that religion requires faith) is the impossibility (already mentioned) of excluding faith from ordinary life. For, as has been already said, friendship is impossible if nothing is to be believed which cannot be demonstrated by reason. And what can be more reasonable than to accept by faith those things which are divinely constituted to prepare the mind for truth. To do otherwise, to withhold the assent of faith, is surely to be a danger to oneself and a warning to others.

"Therefore," argued Augustine, "it is not right to follow those who declare that reason is the only guide. If we may not give assent to that which we cannot prove, we could not attain to certainty, whose children we are. Our conviction that certain persons are our parents is

an act of faith. We have not the smallest doubt, and yet we cannot prove. But we know what we should think of a son who refused to love his parents on the pretext that, after all, he might be mistaken. Filial piety, which is the bond of mankind, would be supplanted by unfilial irreverence. Human society," added Augustine, "simply could not hold together if we determined to believe nothing incapable of demonstration."

"And this is not only true in the natural life: it is also true," urged Augustine, "in religion. The insistence on reason instead of faith is untenable in religion, because mankind consists of the foolish as well as of the wise. Now it is well in worldy matters that the foolish should be guided by the wise. *A fortiori* that is true in religion. If it is the case in commercial life, much more is it the case in spiritual. It must be so, because temporal affairs are easier to understand than eternal. Therefore, so long as we continue to be fools, there is nothing for it but to submit ourselves to the direction of the wise.

"But here the difficult problem faces us, How can the fools discover the wise? They cannot. The fool does not know what wisdom is. Only those who possess it know what it is.

"This difficulty is one which God alone can solve. If God does not exist, or existing does not care, then there is no remedy. But this is precisely the object for which the Catholic Church was created: in order to urge upon all who approach religion the supreme necessity of faith.

"Moreover, the man who forbids me to exercise faith frustrates my acceptance of any religion at all. For if I am to make no act of faith I shall not believe that any such thing as true religion exists. And what I do not believe to exist I certainly shall not seek. Therefore, I shall not

come to him who forbids me to exercise faith, since I cannot come to him without exercising faith. Surely the absurdity of this is enough to refute the theory that faith is to be excluded."

Augustine then expressed himself firmly convinced that unless we exercise faith, and so receive into our minds the germs of truth, which our reason is unable to explain, there is no prospect of restoring our weakened capacities to health and vigour. He is prepared to believe in Christ, and to accept Christ's utterances as true, although unable to comprehend their reason. But Christ is known to him by means of the Catholic Church. Why, then, not submit to be instructed concerning Christ by that Society through which he already believed in Christ? It is not reasonable to believe in Christ on the authority of the Church, and then to believe in the meaning of what Christ said on the authority of a different teacher. "Rather than decide that those who taught me to believe in Christ cannot teach me the right meaning of what He said, I shall infer that they can teach me neither, and thereby my faith in Christ itself would disappear.

"Moreover, Christ Himself demanded our faith: 'Ye believe in God, believe also in Me.' Christ led the ignorant and foolish by faith. You want to lead them by reason.

"And here," maintained Augustine, "is the *rationale* of the Incarnation. Could anything more generous be conceived on the part of Deity than that the Wisdom of God, to whom we ought to cling, should condescend to become man?" ("Suscipere hominem dignaretur.")

It was therefore Augustine's strong and reasoned conviction that faith is the means by which wisdom is to be attained. No doubt it is deplorable to be deceived. But it is still more deplorable to exercise no faith, so long as we are able to apprehend. And, reflects Augustine,

if there is no providence of God presiding over human affairs, then there is nothing to be said about religion at all. He implies that without faith religion simply will not exist.

If we would summarize Augustine's conception of the relation between faith and reason it may be said that he assigns chronological priority to the former and intrinsic superiority to the latter. He never opposes faith and reason as if they were mutually incompatible. He insists again and again that faith is never reasonless. There are reasons and reasons, often cumulative, but not irresistible; justifying, but not compelling, the assent of faith. Moreover, he does not regard faith as of necessity the ultimate or the ideal state. His aspiration is to certify by reason what he accepts by faith. But at the same time, while his experience finds that this use of reason frequently meets with its reward, he is always none the less conscious of its limitations and its perils. His deep awareness of the immensity of the problem of religion and the liability of the individual mind to miss the truth leaves him always prepared to acknowledge that what we can experience or prove is but a fragment of the eternal realities, so that apparently faith must not only be a lifelong necessity here, but may extend into regions in the world beyond.

CHAPTER XVIII

AUGUSTINE ON FREEDOM

AUGUSTINE'S discussion with Evodius concerning free will was begun during his residence in Rome, after the baptism, and completed at a later date, after the return to Africa.[1] The third book of that work was written in Africa, and the discussion contained in it must have been held there too. For its contents display a theological progress far in advance of the writings belonging to the earlier time. The subject is the problem how human freedom is to be reconciled with divine foreknowledge. It seems certain that such a discussion could not possibly have been held until Augustine's mind was more matured than it was in Italy.

"How can human freedom be reconciled with divine foreknowledge? Things cannot happen otherwise than God foreknows they will happen. If He foreknew that men would sin, it was inevitable that what He foreknew should occur. Is not necessity and fatalism the inference?"

Augustine replies that, in his opinion, men are prone to this perplexity because they do not seek religiously, being more disposed to excuse themselves than to confess their sins.

Here, then, are some criticisms on this problem.

1. If God foreknows what men will do, He also foreknows what retribution he will inflict. Does His fore-

[1] *De libero Arbitrio*, A.D. 388–395. For St. Augustine's teaching on Free Will, see an Essay in Fonsegrive, *Sur le libre arbitre*, pp. 97–112.

knowledge of His own actions destroy His freedom? Because He foreknows what He will do, does He act by necessity?

Evodius replies that he is discussing not what happens in God, but what happens in relation to the creatures.

Augustine acutely points out that this distinction is untenable. For God foreknows at the present moment what He will confer on the creature in the future. Yet He does not confer it by necessity, but by free will. We do not grow old by our will, but of necessity; nor die by will, but by necessity. But that we do not will by the will is impossible. Although God foreknows our will, it does not follow that we do not will anything with our will. Although God foreknows your future happiness, and what He foreknows must happen, else there is no foreknowledge, yet we are not compelled thereby to hold that you will be made happy without your will.

"Moreover," adds Augustine, "what is it that God foreknows? It is that you will use your will. How, then, can His foreknowledge destroy the reality of that which He foreknows? He foreknows your future will. He cannot foreknow this unless you will actually will. He foreknows your freedom, and therefore you will be free."

Evodius is not convinced. The idea that foreknowledge involves the necessary occurrence of that which it foreknows haunts him. He cannot see how human freedom is compatible with divine foreknowledge.

2. Augustine attempts another line of argument. He asks whether Evodius considers that our free will is irreconcilable with the divine foreknowledge because that foreknowledge is divine, or because it is foreknowledge.

Evodius replies, Because it is divine.

Then, asks Augustine, if Evodius foreknew that a man would sin, it would not be inevitable that he would sin.

Evodius has to admit that the sin would be inevitable; for my foreknowledge could not exist unless I foreknew what is certain to occur.

"Then the necessary occurrence," says Augustine, "of that which God foreknows is not necessary because the foreknowledge is God's but simply because it is foreknowledge."

"Granted," says Evodius. "But what of that?"

"Why," replies Augustine, "you do not compel a man to sin whose sin you foreknew. Your foreknowledge does not destroy his freedom. Yet he will certainly do what you foreknew. If this be the case with your foreknowledge, that it is quite compatible with another person's freedom, so also it is with God. God does not compel a man to sin. But He foreknows the use that men will make of their free will."

3. "Look at it," urges Augustine, "in another way. Foreknowledge is related to the future as memory is related to the past. Your memory does not cause the deeds of the past to have been done. So neither does foreknowledge cause the deeds of the future to occur."

"But would it not have been better not to create what God foreknew would be misused?"

Augustine replies that on this principle nothing but the very highest existences could have been created. While a sinful soul is relatively to a sinless soul vastly inferior, it is still relatively superior to the best of unintelligent existences. Nor is it really rational.

"Nor have we any right," urges Augustine, "to say that it had been better if those who misuse free will had never been permitted to exist. For there is room for inferior things as well as for superior. The inferiority of earth to heaven is no reason why earth should not be created.

"A straying horse is better than a stone which cannot

stray. And a creature endowed with free will which he misuses is more excellent than that which cannot sin because it has no will.

"The Creator, therefore, is to be praised in all the inferior as well as superior things which He has created.

"And if any creature were to say that, being miserable, he would rather not exist, Augustine bluntly assures him that this is a lie. What the man in reality desires is not to cease to exist, but to escape from misery. Let him, therefore, praise God for his existence and blame himself for the misery which his own misuse of His gifts has inflicted."

Augustine points to the tenacity with which men cling to life. If anyone here interposes to the effect that his repugnance to death is not due to a preference of miserable existence to cessation of existence, but to a fear that he may find after death an increase to his misery; Augustine replies, If such increase of misery would be unjust, then he need not fear it. If it is just, let him praise the Creator for His righteousness.

The truth evidently is that we are unhappy just in proportion as we do not approach true existence, and conversely happy in proportion as we approach it.

The way, therefore, to escape from misery is to love true existence. To increase the love of existence must awaken the desire of immortality. For the more passionately you long for life, the more you must desire that life to be eternal. Therefore, you must see that your affections be not fixed on things temporal. For temporal things formerly had no existence, and when they have been experienced they cease to exist. While they lie in the future, they are not yet: when they have come and passed, they are no longer. Consequently, he who loves existence, in the deepest sense, must love that which is

abiding and cannot pass away. From the love of the transient he must rise to the love of the permanent.

Pursuing still further this thought of the worth of existence, Augustine is led to make reflection on suicide. Suicide does not in the least imply the desire of non-existence or annihilation. A man may, indeed, believe that after death he will no longer exist, and under the burden of overwhelming trouble he may seek refuge in death; nevertheless what he is really seeking is not non-existence, but peace. That which his nature craves, whatever his intellect supposes, is escape from a burden, deliverance from trouble, rest. But to be at peace is not to be non-existent. On the contrary, peace is a truer existence than unrest. For unrest is a state of perpetual change, in which, when one emotion comes, another goes. But peace, or rest, is constancy and permanence; it is, in the deepest sense, that which most deserves the name of existence. Accordingly, even the man who is driven to suicide, without belief in a life beyond, is, notwithstanding his convictions, seeking that he may exist, although he says he thinks he will not. He wants to be at rest. But to be at rest is certainly to be. What he desires is fuller existence, not none. So great is the craving for existence even in those unconscious of it, and even when the very hope of existence is denied. Therefore, let men praise the goodness of the Creator for that gift which is so high in all esteem.

But if a man shall urge that it lay within the power of the Almighty to ordain that none of His creatures should come to misery, and that goodness required that He should so ordain—Augustine answers that the whole creation, from the highest to the lowest, is ordered in successive ranks and stages and degrees. Concerning these, it is neither reasonable to say, This ought not to have existed at all, or, That ought to have been other than it is.

To say that the moon ought not to exist because it is inferior to the sun, is to forget that it is superior to a lantern, which nevertheless has its uses. Moreover, to exalt the moon to equality with the sun is to perpetuate the double blunder of adding to that which is already perfect, by making another sun, and of disparaging that which is also perfect relatively in its own degree.

If it be asked, What has all this to do with misery? Augustine's reply is that misery also has its place in the scale and harmonious order of the universe. This does not mean that the creature's misery is necessary in itself to the perfection of the creation, any more than the creature's sin is the necessary background to righteousness; as a shadow enhances the light. Certainly, neither our sin nor our misery is necessary to the completeness of the created world. What it does mean is that our sin disorders the administration of the moral universe, and our misery is the penal consequence by which that moral order is vindicated. Where no sin exists there is no misery, and the universe is perfect. Where sin exists there follows misery, and still the universe is perfect.

Every creature, therefore, which God made, whether remaining in goodness or deflecting into evil, is still consistent with the universal order, and with the righteousness of Him who created.

And here Augustine propounds one of his most characteristic statements. All nature, so far as it is nature, is good.

All rational nature, endowed with freedom of will, is to be praised, if it remains in union with the unchanging good, and He is to be praised who created it. If it does not so continue, it is to be blamed. But in that blame its Creator is being praised.

His nature is praised whose fault is blamed. Moreover, the very fact of blame and rebuke implies the existence

of freedom, and therefore of responsibility. His defect is contrary to his nature. For this is the very essence of evil, that it is contrary to the nature of that in which it exists. But no defect can be deserving of blame unless it is voluntary. Blame implies freedom and responsibility. Blame cannot attach to that which is as it ought to be. Nor can there be any obligation to be anything unless the power to be has been bestowed. And the obligation is relative to the person by whom the capacity is bestowed.

Now God owes nothing to any one; for all His gifts are acts of grace. If any one says that reward is due to his merits, let him at least recognize that he does not owe his existence to his merits. There can be no merits in one who does not exist. And surely the merit of turning towards God comes from Him from whom existence is derived.

Evodius, here at last, after a very prolonged silence, recovers speech enough to acknowledge himself convinced that our sins are by no means to be attributed to the responsibility of our Creator. But he wants to know what is the cause which leads the will to sin. Grant that the will is the cause of sin, what causes the action of the will?

Augustine replies to this question that the root of all evil is inordinate desire. And if you seek for a cause of this root of all evil, you will then want a cause for that cause, and so involve yourself in an endless series of questionings.

But there is no cause of sin beyond the will. Sin can only be imputed to the sinner. Nor can it be justly imputed unless to one who wills it.

Whatever cause be concerned to move the will, either that cause can be resisted or it cannot. If it cannot, there is no sin in being compelled by it. But if it can be

resisted, then let it be resisted, and here also there is no sin. No man can sin in that which cannot be resisted. But he does sin, and therefore it can be resisted.

This frank insistence on human power to do right was afterwards quoted against its author by Pelagius, who took it as declaration of the power of the human will unaided by God, and therefore as excluding the necessity of grace. Such use of Augustine's statement was manifestly unfair. He was dealing with human freedom and responsibility, and not with the doctrine of grace. He gave the human side of the truth without the divine. He was writing before the denial of the necessity of divine co-operation with human freedom had become a controversy. His point is to insist that sin can be resisted. He had no difficulty, therefore, at a later time, when he wrote on "Nature and Grace," in supplementing the human agency with a reference to the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation," which implies that sin can be resisted (otherwise the appeal would be useless), and also introduces the doctrine of grace (by which human weakness can be strengthened).

Indeed Augustine proceeded to give, in his profoundly penetrating way, an analysis of actual experience in the moral life. He points out that the two principal results entailed in sin are loss of light and loss of power. Ignorance is the just retribution on refusal to use knowledge aright. He who disobeys what he knows to be right loses the knowledge of what is right. And he who will not do right when he has the power, loses the power to do it when he would. Ignorance and weakness are penal results of sin.

Augustine further contends that objectors were making an unfair criticism on the sin of the first man. It was being complained, in theological controversy, that our forefather sinned, and that we were afflicted with ignorance,

through which a lower course became habitual and involved us in weakness and inability to rise to better things. Augustine replies that this criticism would have more weight if experience did not show examples of men who have actually risen to better things. But such examples are numerous. If men were less inclined to self-defence, and appealed to Him who can help, there is no reason why they should not be of the number of those who have risen.

In a remarkable passage Augustine draws attention to the double signification of the word "sin." Just as the tongue means primarily the physical member by which we speak, and subsequently the language or utterances thereby conveyed, so the expression "sin" denotes first that which is properly so called, namely, an evil act knowingly committed by free will; but also the consequences which are entailed in the act of commission.

Then Augustine summarizes the various theories of the origin of the individual soul: whether it comes by transmission from our fathers (Traducianism); or whether it is a separate creation at each human birth (Creationism). As to these, and the variations of opinion about them, Augustine, with that caution which was more characteristic of his earlier theological speculations than of his later, will not venture to pronounce. Either this subject has not yet been profoundly discussed by Catholic expositors; or if it has, their writings have not come his way. What Augustine would guard most anxiously, after his recent escape from Oriental Dualism and theories of Deity imprisoned in material elements, is that no theory derogatory to the substance of the Creator should prevail. Mistaken conceptions concerning Deity are (he feels acutely) the danger to be at every cost avoided.

Advancing from the problems of the origin of the race to the conditions of life as they are now found, Augustine

concerns himself in a very interesting passage with the death and suffering of infant children.

Augustine is persuaded that not a single leaf of a tree is superfluous. It has its place, its purpose. Much more with the human generation. It is needless anxiety to fear that there can be nothing intermediate between righteous and sinful deeds; or that the divine decision can find no middle course between reward and punishment.

The advantage of infant baptism was perplexing certain minds. Augustine's answer shows that he had not yet penetrated far into the sacramental principle. He thinks that the faith of their sponsors must be beneficial; and then there is the authority of the Church.

CHAPTER XIX

AUGUSTINE ON TRUE RELIGION

THE discovery of religious truth for oneself naturally makes a man eager to share with others his great possession. The larger his heart and the stronger his faith, the stronger will be his desire to communicate his knowledge. More especially will this desire intensify if he has previously been instrumental in leading others astray from religious truth. This was Augustine's case. His anxiety, after his own reception into the Church, was to convince the friends whom he had misled. For this purpose he wrote his treatise on True Religion.[1] It was written while he was still a layman, and only three years after he was baptized. Its object was to convince his patron, Romanian, who had followed him into Dualism, but not into Christianity. Here, as in all Augustine's works, his wealth of thought and profusion of ideas outrun systematic treatment. But the principal features of this remarkable treatise are not difficult to outline. The interest of it for our purpose is that in the effort to convince his friend what is the true religion, Augustine throws further light on the process of his own conversion.

Augustine begins by explaining his adherence to Christianity rather than to any other religion known to him. Polytheism never appears to have had at any time the smallest attraction for him, either in its theory or in its

[1] *De vera Religione*, A.D. 390.

worship. He had seen it fully displayed at Carthage. He saw also that philosophers who attended its worship refuted its theories. Indeed, his firm belief was that if Plato himself returned to life he would find in Christianity the fulfilment of his aspirations. Augustine suggests, not without a sense of his temerity, that he would like to inquire of Plato several things. A meeting between Plato and Augustine: what a subject for a new dialogue of the dead! The great African thinker is less under the spell of the great Greek thinkers than he was. He does not hesitate now to say that Plato is more seductive than convincing ("suavius ad legendum quam potentius ad persuadendum scripsit Plato"). There it is: Augustine's bold judgment on the greatest pre-Christian mind. He is convinced that if Plato could have seen the power of Christianity over the lives of men and women, he would have confessed that such results could not have been produced except by One whom the power and wisdom of God had from His birth exceptionally illuminated and endowed. Augustine certainly does not mean that this conception of Christ's personality is the Christian; for he goes on to speak in a later place of the Incarnation, and the consubstantiality of Christ with the Father. What he means is that if Plato returned to this world, the religion which he would accept would be the Christian, on the ground that it responds most closely to his aspirations. Indeed, Augustine goes so far as to make the startling assertion that Plato's conversion to Christianity would have been effected by the change of a few words and opinions. He is all the more persuaded of the truth of this assertion because such conversion is exactly what had happened recently in the case of many a Platonist thinker. But at the same time he goes on to remark that there is no room in the Church for those who hold opinions other than the truth requires, by which he means

other than the Church maintains, concerning God the Father, and His Wisdom, and the divine Gift, by which he means the Holy Spirit.

In grand and imposing contrast to all inferior forms of religion stood the world-wide or Catholic Church. In relation to the Catholic Church all the subordinate religions and theories have their use. Paganism is the subject-matter for the Church's operations. Heresy is the negative to the Church's truth. Schism is the mutable contrast to the Church's permanence and stability. The Catholic Church is to Augustine the imposing fact, the magnificent institution, the divine creation, by which his intellect and heart were captivated and satisfied.

It is that body which not only is, but is also called and goes by the name of, Catholic; and that not only among its adherents, but also among opponents of its claims.

Nevertheless Augustine is not blind to its defects.

He maintains that true religion is not to be sought in schism. At the same time he regards the position of schism as entirely different from that of heresy. He says that the divine Providence often allows really saintly men to be, through the restless energies of the worldly-minded and fanatical, expelled from the communion of the Christian Church. And if, for the sake of the peace of the Church, these sufferers bear this privation patiently, and neither perpetrate fresh heresies nor schisms, they serve as examples of love and fervent faith. Their duty is to wait until this tyranny be overpast—proclaiming the same faith as that within the Church. These the Father, who sees in secret, in secret also rewards. Men might imagine this case to be extremely rare, but instances are not wanting. In fact it is commoner than is generally supposed.

Certainly these are singular reflections from a convert of only three years' standing. They sound more like the

outcome of a long-matured experience. So might a man record his judgment after witnessing, through the action of unwise authority, the exclusion from the visible Church of persons who deserved a better fate. What was it that prompted Augustine to write these thoughts? A higher critic might infer that the sentence was written in Augustine's later years. Perhaps a more critical penetration will admire the maturity of Augustine's character. We may wonder what it was that prompted these reflections.

What the cases were which Augustine had in mind when he wrote in such a strain it is not possible to tell. But this sympathetic estimate of the excluded, written by a convert of only three years' standing, is a remarkable instance of the great writer's insight. While writing in order to promote a friend's conversion to the faith, he is quite frank about the defects of the Church. But, while he admits these deplorable anomalies, he is more free to advocate the Church's claims; that Church which every one is compelled to recognize as Catholic, whether they desire it or no. He balances the human and the divine, and does not allow the former to obscure the latter.

And here Augustine sets before Romanian some of the principal doctrines of the Christian Creed. He dwells on the Christian conception of God, the Trinity and the Unity, and the mutual co-operation in creative energy. The Father made everything through the Son in the gift of the Holy Spirit. An act of the Will of this Trinity produced all creation. Hence the true relationship of mankind to God must obviously be one of subordination and unity. And the root of evil consists in elevating the creature into the place of the Creator. Conversely, by adherence to God we come to share His immortality.

From these main contents of the Christian doctrine of God, Augustine passes naturally to consider the Christian

doctrine of the origin of evil. And here he vigorously refutes the theory which ascribed the origin of sin to the existence of a substance inherently evil. There is no life, no existence whatever, which does not proceed from God. For God is the supreme existence, and the Author of all existence. No life, as far as it is life, is evil, but only as far as it tends to death. Thus evil is nothingness. So far from being a substance, evil is the very opposite and negation of existence. Augustine claims that the usage of language attests the truth of his assertion, for "nequitia" is "quod ne quidquam sit"; and evil men are commonly described as "nihili homines" (nonentities). When life by a voluntary act of the will departs from the source of life, upon which its existence depends, it necessarily tends to nothingness. And this is evil. But there is no such thing as a substance evil in itself. Everything, so far as it really is, is good. Evil is not, like a fever, an involuntary malady, but a misdirected self-determination. Otherwise there would be no meaning in correction or rebuke. All moral law, all human discipline, rests upon the assumption that evil is a voluntary defect.

Augustine throws this doctrine into the form of a dialogue.

Q. Why do the creatures fail?
R. Because they are liable to change.
Q. And why are they liable to change?
R. Because they are not the highest life.
Q. Why are they not the highest?
R. Because they are inferior to their Creator.
Q. And who is their Creator?
R. He who is the Highest.
Q. Who is that?
R. It is God, the unchangeable Trinity. He made them by His wisdom and sustained them by His goodness.

Q. Why did He create them?

R. Because existence is good.

Because they are good, they are of God. Because they are not the highest good, they are not God. God is good which is incapable of defect. All other good things are of God. But they are liable to become defective because of themselves they are nothing. But even in their defective state they are partially good. For they are God's creatures. And their deficiencies can be remedied by Him.

Now clearly, if evil is a perverse action of the will, it is not a substance. It is a moral choice. There is no such thing in the universe as an evil nature. Evil is each man's fault. And here Augustine adopts the phraseology of the Church, and speaks of the soul being regenerated by the grace of God.

Moreover, Augustine reminds Romanian of the work of God for the recovery of man. Never did God act more beneficently for the welfare of the human race than when the Wisdom of God, that is the only Son, consubstantial with the Father and coeternal, condescended to take upon Him the whole man, and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

We were absorbed in earthliness: unable to penetrate to the perception of spiritual verities. Therefore to show how high a place human nature holds in the ranks of the intelligent creation, He appeared to men as Man. The very nature which was to be liberated was itself assumed.

Of this Incarnate life Augustine points out first the *moral* grandeur—consisting in its reversal of all the ordinary human estimates. Mankind perversely absorbs itself in pursuit of riches which are the satellites of pleasure: He chose to be poor. They thirst for honour and power: He declined to be a King. Their sensitive

vanity resents a slight: He bore all insults. The possessions which we covet for the satisfaction of our unregulated desires He proved, by refusal, to be of small account. The trials which we neglect our duty in order to avoid He showed in their true value by enduring. For there is no sin conceivable, unless either in seeking what He despised or in avoiding what He endured. That is the moral grandeur of Christianity. To this should be added its *physical* teachings. The Resurrection of Christ from the dead is a demonstration that no part of human nature perishes; that the body becomes the servant of the soul, when the soul becomes the servant of God; that there is no evil in substance at all.

To this must be added the devotional methods of Christianity; its appeal to the intellect, in its similitudes, its utterances, its historic facts and actions, its sacraments, and their marvellous adaptation to the educational needs of the human spirit.

Next, and in the third place, Augustine now proceeds to explain to Romanian what the method is by which this religion can be reached and appropriated. And, of course, here he is explaining the process by which he himself was converted. There are two ways for man's acquisition of truth. One is *authority*, and the other is *reason*. Authority demands faith as our response, and also prepares the way for reason. Augustine is careful to point out that this does not mean that authority has no connection with reason. On the contrary, authority itself is accepted on the ground of reason. The faith required of a Christian is not the sacrifice of the intellect. Augustine further draws attention to the place which authority occupies in temporal affairs. The past is known to us by faith rather than by demonstration. And with regard to faith in the sphere of things spiritual, the question is what authority we will recognize, what books, what men we will believe.

Granting, then, the necessity of authority and of its correlative, faith, the question is, What religious authorities are we to believe? Augustine puts the alternative as between Polytheism and Theism. He decides without hesitation for the latter. As we have already seen, Polytheism never attracted him. The ground for assent to Theism is the superiority of unity. It lies in the very nature of things that higher authority belongs to that which tends to unity. The human mind aspires towards unity. Undoubtedly we must assent to those who maintain that there is one true God, rather than to those who maintain that there are many. Augustine could never have been a polytheist in religion. The Unity of God is an imperative necessity. A Neoplatonist was constrained to believe that the ultimate reality is One.

Then with regard to authority in the form of miracle, Augustine suggests to Romanian that these were necessary for the original founding of the religion, but when once the Catholic Church was universally diffused and deeply rooted, such manifestations were not permitted to last down to our time. The reason being that the mind is not always to be seeking after the visible, and also that what becomes customary loses its effect. Augustine corrected this statement on maturer reflection in after years,[1] and explained that it must not be taken to signify that miracles had ceased. For previously to the time when he wrote this book on True Religion, he had witnessed a blind man restored to sight at Milan. Yet he is conscious that there is a difference between the miracles accompanying the foundation of the Church (as recorded in the Acts) and anything that occurred among his own contemporaries.

Augustine also suggested that as there are five ages of the natural man—infancy, childhood, adolescence, maturity, old age—there are also ages in the development

[1] *Retract.*, i. 13. 7,

of the spiritual man. They range over a long process—from the first rudiments of religion up to the everlasting blessedness. And Augustine may be thought to suggest that a life which is a gradual growth in spiritual things will long be under the necessity of exercising faith in authority.

The other avenue to knowledge is reason. Let us see how reason can advance from the visible to the invisible, and from the temporal to the eternal. The supremacy of man does not consist in the senses, in which, indeed, many of the beasts surpass him, but in the rational life.

And here Augustine faces the problem of the beautiful. We judge things by a law of proportion and symmetry. But why certain things please us, and why, as we grow to think more clearly, we delight in them, no man, if he thinks rightly, will presume to say. For, says Augustine, as we and all rational souls judge concerning things which are inferior to us in the scale of being, so the truth alone can judge concerning ourselves. But concerning the truth, not even the Father Himself passes judgment. For truth is not less than Himself. And therefore, whatever the Father judges He judges by means of the truth. And here Augustine enters on religious mysticism of a very lofty kind. This eternal Truth is rightly called the Son, for He is not from Himself, but from the supreme Original who is called the Father, from whom all Fatherhood derives its name. Hence the Father is said to judge no man, but to have given all judgment to the Son. This eternal Truth passes judgment upon us, not we on it. It is our right to recognize it, but not to pass judgment upon it. Augustine seems to mean that there is a law in things which is not our subjective fancy, not imposed by us on them, but conversely an objective reality which impresses itself on us.

But, says Augustine, to many people the sole considera-

tion is the delight which the beautiful conveys to them. They do not advance to higher considerations, nor inquire why it is that things beautiful delight them.

Now, continues Augustine, pursuing his subtle argument, the objects which we contemplate tend towards unity. But unity is what they never completely attain. There is no object but has some trace of unity. Nor any object which fulfils it. Where, then, does this unity exist, by which you test and compare the imperfect unity of these objects which you see? Where is this unity which you declare they are unable to fulfil? If you did not already possess this idea, how could you speak of the inability of objects to achieve it? [1]

Thus the true use of created things is made when the mind ascends through the creature to the Uncreated. And *the root of all godlessness* is when the creature is loved for itself alone, and to the exclusion of the Creator. This godlessness appears in many forms. There is the godlessness of the worship of the human intellect, to the exclusion of the Wisdom of God. There is the godlessness of mere æsthetic admiration of nature, which rests in nature, and ignores it as a revelation of uncreated beauty. There is the godlessness of self-love in its three notorious forms of *pleasure, curiosity* and *pride;* in St. John's language, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. From this triple form of self-love we are warned in the Temptation of Christ. Against the desire of pleasure He sets the ideal of not yielding even to pangs of hunger. Against pride He sets the refusal of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. He reinstates the worship and the service of God. Against curiosity He refuses to venture on the self-willed experience of casting Himself down: because this way

[1] For St. Augustine on the Beautiful, see Sir Wm. Hamilton's *Metaphysics*, ii. 509.

of increasing knowledge does not bring us to the better knowledge of God. Accordingly, he who is filled with the spirit of true religion will neither seek in the wilderness of the world the satisfaction of desire, nor become on the mountain elated with pride, nor cast himself down from the heights by an eager curiosity to know by experience the nature of inferior things.

The true path of human development and perfection is that of return to the infinite Loveliness from whom the soul has departed.

Still further this intrepid thinker advances in pursuit of truth. He calls on Romanian in celebrated oft-quoted words, "Look not beyond yourself. Return within. Truth dwells in the inner man" ("Noli foras ire, in teipsum redi; in interiore homine habitat veritas"). And, continues Augustine, if you find your own nature to be changeable, transcend also yourself. But remember, he adds, when you transcend yourself you transcend also the sphere of reasoning ("ratiocinantem animam"). Thither, then, advance whence the light of reason itself is kindled. Here Augustine rises beyond argument to pure mystical intuition. This is quite in keeping with the mystical element in the philosophy which he had adopted: only with this vital difference, that the truth which he contemplates is not abstract unity, but the God and Father of Jesus Christ. Thus the mysticism of Augustine is essentially different from that of his philosophic instructors. The object on which the one rests is impersonal, the other is personal Deity.

But what if Romanian is unable to follow Augustine in this religious ascent? If you do not apprehend what I say, and doubt whether these things are really true, at any rate you do not doubt that you are doubtful concerning the truth of these things. You are therefore certain that you doubt. Now ask yourself, Whence comes

this certainty? Certainty is derived from the Light which lighteth every man. It is not caused by physical appearances. "Ye are not what I seek, nor are ye that whereby I determine your worth," exclaims Augustine, addressing the temporal manifestations of nature. That by which man judges all appearances, and estimates their value, is of a higher order than they. Augustine means that there is an eternal standard of truth. Accordingly the principle reached by this analysis of the process of thought is as follows: The very fact of doubt implies the presence of truth.

Every man who realizes that he doubts, realizes a truth, and is certain of that which he realizes. Consequently he is certain of a truth. Every man, therefore, who doubts whether truth exists has within himself a truth of which he does not doubt. He therefore who is able to doubt concerning particular truths has no right to doubt the existence of such a thing as truth. There is such a thing as eternal verity. Although every individual reasoner should perish, still truth exists. The reasoner did not create this truth, he only discovers it. Its objective existence is independent of our human minds.

After these expositions and arguments Augustine concludes with an earnest exhortation against all false and inferior forms of religion. Our religion shall not consist in the creations of our fancy. Far nobler is that which is true than that which is a fictitious production of individual caprice. Neither shall our religion consist in worship of the masterpieces of men: for the maker is greater than his work, and yet we may not worship him. Neither shall our religion consist in the worship of the dead. They are to be honoured by imitation; not worshipped as a religion. Neither shall our religion consist in the worship of nature, or of the vital forces by which things live. Neither shall our religion consist in the

worship of the human intellect; for the human intellect is subordinate to that which gives it perfection, namely, the everlasting Truth. Nor can we worship the very highest form of created intelligences. For the Angel derives his wisdom from the same Source whence man derives his, and that is from the Eternal Wisdom and Truth. The very purpose of the temporal dispensation of Providence for the saving of the human race was that human nature might receive the changeless Wisdom of God, who is consubstantial with the Father.

Religion, then, in its very essence is that which binds us and unites us to the One Almighty God who exists in a threefold personality, the Trinity of one substance, the one God from whom we live, through whom we live, in whom we live, and who is the Beginning to which we return, and the example of our following, and the grace for our reconciliation.

This treatise on "True Religion" is rather an exposition or confession of faith than an attempt to demonstrate. It is less argumentative, but far more spiritual, than the earlier works; its insight is more penetrating than that displayed in his works on Morals of the Manichæans and of the Catholic Church. It is, of course, pervaded throughout by consciousness of escape from the Manichæan Dualism. Its estimate of philosophy is curious. Plato is here more pleasing than persuasive: an estimate worth comparing with later utterances in the Confessions. The maturity of his judgment on exclusion of Catholic-minded persons from the Church is most remarkable. The religious idealism of the treatise is singularly fascinating, and shows greater obligations to philosophy than the criticism on Plato would suggest.

This treatise on True Religion shows a marked development in Augustine's insight into the doctrines of the Church. The distinctly Christian elements are larger

than before. No doubt he speaks of God in terms which are at times capable of a merely philosophic interpretation. If he speaks of God as the Father and His Wisdom and the Divine Gift, these expressions are liable to another than the Christian meaning. Yet it should be carefully noted that God has now become constantly for Augustine "the Father." The Fatherhood of God represents for Augustine the ultimate reality. Beside the Father there is "the Son." The Father is the original and ideal of all fatherhood, wherever it may be found. Augustine dwells frequently now on the Trinity and the Unity, and on their mutual co-operation in creative energy. The Father made everything through the Son in the gift of the Holy Spirit. God is the unchangeable Trinity. He made the creatures by His Wisdom, and sustains them by His goodness.

Then also Augustine speaks clearly of the Incarnation. "Never did God act more beneficently for the welfare of the human race than when the Wisdom of God, that is the Only Son, consubstantial with the Father and coeternal, condescended to take upon Him the whole man, and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Here is the great Nicene expression boldly affirmed—"consubstantial with the Father." The peculiarly Christian precept is affirmed that the nature which was to be delivered must be assumed by Deity ("ipsa enim natura suscipienda erat quae liberanda").

So too Augustine dwells on the glories of the Incarnate Life and its complete reversal of all human estimates of value.

Moreover, the chief contents of the Christian Creed are grouped together, and set forth for Romanian's edification. There is the assumption of Manhood ("illa hominis sacrosancta susceptio"); the Virgin Birth; the Death of the Son of God for us; His Resurrection from the

dead; His Ascension into Heaven; His session at the right hand of the Father; the forgiveness of sins; the Day of Judgment; the Resurrection of the Body; the eternal Trinity contrasted with the mutability of the creature.

Indeed there is a great deal more of the Christian ideas and principles than this. The whole treatise is dominated by a consciousness of the spiritual characteristics of the Catholic Church. The martyrs are commemorated. The *sacra christiana* are spoken of as become traditional, daily read of in churches and explained by the priests ("sacerdotibus"). There is a reference also to the almost universal use of the *Sursum Corda*.

It has been most truly remarked [1] that in all this there is a distinct Christianizing of Augustine's intellectual outlook. And indeed among the elements of this Christianizing is Augustine's firm apprehension of the value of authority, obedience and love as fundamental to the possession of true religion. There is a deep sense of the necessity of divesting oneself of pride, of profound self-distrust, of lowly submission to the one true God, and unreserved self-committal to His ruling.

Beyond all doubt the idea of authority is intimately associated in Augustine's mind with the idea of the Church. But it is the idea of the Church as a divine creation. And therefore the authority recognized is not human, but ultimately divine. It must also be remembered that this whole conception of authority is not philosophy, but Christian religion. The value which Augustine here ascribes to authority has no agreement with Neoplatonism. It is due to Christian Revelation embodied in a corporate institution.

Nor must we fail to notice the wealth of Christian terminology contained in the final chapter of the work.

[1] Dorries, p. 83.

We read here of omnipotence, and the Trinity of one substance, and the grace whereby we are reconciled. Note particularly this last thought. For here we are brought into the sphere of the Redemption through Christ.

In Christian doctrine the treatise still shows a certain immaturity. The freedom of the will is affirmed in unguarded sentences, which the Pelagian disputes compelled him afterwards to qualify, if not correct. The Resurrection of Christ is viewed solely as a demonstration that no part of human nature will perish. The life of Christ is appealed to rather as an example, and an estimate of true values, than as redemptive, or the means of justification. But the wealth of thought, the depth of insight, the beautiful exposition of the significance of the beautiful, exhibit all the fascinating power of religious genius. And when we remember that it was written expressly for Romanian's conversion, we can only add that it deserved that its purpose should be achieved. If Augustine owed his education mainly to Romanian's generosity, seldom has a gift been more nobly repaid.

CHAPTER XX

AUGUSTINE'S CONFESSIONS

THE Confessions are commonly read by themselves. But to be fully appreciated they ought to be read in connection with the earlier writings and the fragments of autobiography scattered in other places. It is only in this way that the process of Augustine's development is completely understood. It is wonderful what light the earlier writings throw upon the later, and how the later help to explain the earlier. The Confessions are the crown of all the rest. This is the masterpiece, an amazing self-analysis.

When the modern critical reader of Augustine's early works written before baptism turns to the pages of the Confessions, he is aware of considerable differences between the knowledge of Christianity apparent in the first and in the second of these two sources. In the earlier writings, belonging to the period of Augustine's retreat, the reader finds the general atmosphere is philosophic rather than Christian; comparatively little is said concerning fundamental dogmas which are distinctive of Christian religion; comparatively little which a Neoplatonist could not accept. Christ is regarded more as the Word of God than as the Incarnate. The Christianity is Neoplatonic rather than Christian. But in the Confessions philosophy is somewhat disparaged, and the convert seems to have held far more definite Christian doctrine at his conversion than the earlier discussions suggest.

What his early writings distinctly prove is that Augustine's real grasp of Christian doctrine began with his baptism. When he gave in his name as a candidate he undoubtedly held in intention what the Church believed. But his mind, being preoccupied by purely philosophic speculations and Neoplatonic ideas, had not realized the significance of doctrines to which he was prepared to give a verbal assent. It could scarcely be otherwise. The philosophic system of Platonism which not only had fascinated him, but had greatly helped his way to Christian faith, was indeed intensely mystical, but it had nothing to say on sin and penitence. It promoted a serene self-content, and by no means a profound self-dissatisfaction and self-humiliation. And although Augustine's soul was in a deeply penitential mood, he does not at first appear to have realized that this repentant spirit was a natural product of Christian presuppositions, but not at all the product of the philosophic outlook on life. The mystical element of Neoplatonism had appealed to Augustine's nature, but he had gone far beyond the principles of that philosophy. His intensely religious temperament had risen almost instinctively to the Christian idea of sin, although he had as yet not grasped the Christian doctrines of mediation and redemption.

Accordingly, if in his Confessions he ascribes to himself a knowledge of Christian truth which his earlier writings do not display, this ascription is perfectly correct according to his heart, although it may not be correct according to his head. His mystical nature had gone in advance of his intellectual understanding. And this was what the Neoplatonic mysticism had itself promoted, because it depended far more on intuition than on intellectual demonstration. It encouraged an ascent toward Deity in which insight had more place than reason.

Augustine's record of his conversion was not written

until some thirteen years after the event. And naturally it was written from the standpoint of the year 400, and not from that of 387, when it actually happened. It is not at all surprising if a profounder knowledge of the Christian doctrine appears in this record than Augustine possessed at the time of his conversion. Thirteen years of thought and study and maturer Christian experience did not go for nothing. He has sometimes transferred back into the earlier period conditions and knowledge which, in some respects, belong more strictly to the later. It was natural, almost inevitable, that the Bishop should not speak exactly as the convert had done in the six months which immediately followed his conversion.

Many a rapturous devotional passage in the Confessions represents the maturity of Augustine's religious experience, and could not have been written by the novice in Italy. And yet there are wonderful passages in the Soliloquies [1] which warn us to be cautious before determining the limits of Augustine's spiritual capacity in his earlier days. Spiritual progress cannot always be measured by time. Rapid and sudden insight is always possible, even if it is but momentary and not sustained. Nevertheless, it is true to say that the Confessions represent a very marvellous maturity.

And although Augustine in the Confessions may speak somewhat slightingly of philosophy, yet he shows how thoroughly his mind was saturated by it even after he was baptized. The converse with his mother at Ostia has been described as mysticism of a purely Neoplatonic kind. And it certainly is remarkable that no mention occurs even then of Christ or of Redemption.

It has been maintained [2] that the plan and purpose of

[1] *E.g.* i. 5, 6.

[2] See Bohmer, *Die Lobpreisungen des Augustinus*, Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift, 1915, pp. 487–488.

Augustine's Confessions, which of course requires an historical element, reduced that element to a minimum. Indeed, if we did not possess the Life of Augustine written by his contemporary Possidius, and the Dialogues of the period of retreat after his conversion, we should be unable to give a clear account of his career. The Confessions include no attempt at strict chronology. They consist more of self-judgment than of a continuous recital of facts. They are designed to show how his sins and errors were overruled and the power of the divine mercy and grace was displayed in him.

There is much truth in criticism of this kind. Augustine's Confessions are autobiographical in a sense, but not at all the exact modern chronological sense of a biography. The first nine books are concerned with religious and moral self-analysis up to the time of his mother's death. Book X is concerned with his condition at the time when he was writing. The three last books are theological. The Confessions are by no means a complete systematic analysis of the process of his intellectual and spiritual development. They are rather reminiscences of the past in the light of the present compared in years when his faith was much matured.

The Confessions of St. Augustine contain the facts of a *conversion* which is in several ways one of the most impressive on record. Partly because of the intellectual brilliancy of the convert, partly because the narrative is autobiographical, and partly because the process of conversion is analyzed with extraordinary depth and fulness. Here, if anywhere, the theology of conversion may be studied. We know incomparably more of the conversion of St. Augustine than we do of the conversion of St. Paul. The antecedents, intellectual and moral, of the one are abundantly described, of the other briefly hinted.

The question has been often discussed whether Augus-

tine's conversion was intellectual or moral. It is a point on which students are divided. Some writers contend that it was moral,[1] others are convinced that it was intellectual.[2] There is a good deal to be said for each view. We own to a distrust of these sharp departmental divisions.

Pratt regards Augustine as one of the type "for whom religion is very largely a rational matter, and one which could hardly be prized were it otherwise."[3]

Granger describes him as "an imposing example of those who have sought to satisfy the reason in religious truth. At one time he despaired about the truth being found in the Church." "He spent the years from eighteen to thirty in passing from one standpoint to another until he could obtain the best view of the truth."[4]

Not that you can altogether isolate the intellectual from the moral. "This search for the truth in his case, as in all other genuine instances, was touched throughout with the utmost richness of feeling."[5]

The evidence seems to show irresistibly that Augustine's conversion was both intellectual and moral. But also that it was primarily intellectual. There seems no reason why the intellectual conversion should not have occurred in the absence of any such moral entanglement. Indeed something of this kind appears to have happened in the case of quite a number of Augustine's contemporaries.

I

The Conversion of the *Intellect* is traced from the earliest days, when this son of a mixed marriage paid the penalty

[1] Cf. Underwood, *Conversion, Christian and Non-Christian* (1925), pp. 180–182.

[2] Cf. Granger, *The Soul of a Christian*, p. 89. Thouless, *Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, pp. 197–200.

[3] *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 16.

[4] *The Soul of a Christian*, p. 89. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

of domestic conflict between the worldly ambition of his father and the religious aspirations of his mother. It is traced through Oriental Dualism, with its fascinating offer to prove everything and to make no demands on faith. Then we are shown how, in process of time, the Dualistic theory of existence ceased to satisfy the demands of his reason. The Unity of the divine Being was a necessity of thought. The co-existence of two eternal and opposite principles of good and evil was fatal to the Deity of either. The substance of God must be incorruptible. Moreover, the identification of evil with material substance could not be co-ordinated with the sense of responsibility. Evil was not a substance, but a perversion of the will. The deliberate rejection of Dualism inevitably followed. But the rejection of Dualism, while in one sense it was an escape, did not at all necessarily involve an assent to Catholicism. The falsehood of Dualism did not prove the truth of Christianity. The abandonment of convictions means unsettlement. The reaction into Scepticism was not unnatural. He shows us how in that unsettled state of mind he felt much sympathy with the school which doubted everything. What if it were a fact that nothing could be known for certain? There were times when even the existence of God became obscure to him, although never entirely lost. He seems to have felt profoundly that awful loneliness which oppresses the soul when it finds nothing, or rather no one, beyond itself. But the Confessions show that this period of Scepticism, although dangerous, was beneficial. Scepticism never could be the final resting-place of a temperament so profoundly mystical. Scepticism threw him back upon a reconsideration of the limits of reason. He came to realize that reason, which he had taken exclusively for his guide, was incompetent to do more than leave him in the abyss of negation. But from that

abyss his moral sense recoiled. His conscience demanded God. God could not be demonstrated by reason. But Augustine awakened to the fact that reason is not the only avenue to truth. There is also authority; and the correlative of authority is faith.

At this stage the Confessions described Augustine's encounter with the mystical philosophy of the Neoplatonists. He tells us that he had not yet escaped from a materialist conception of the nature of Deity. He conceived of God's relation to the world as that of the sea pervading a sponge.[1] "And yet," he adds, "the faith of Thy Christ, our Lord and Saviour, taught me by the Catholic Church, stuck fast in my heart, in many points indeed as yet unformed, and fluctuating from the rule of doctrine; yet did not my mind utterly leave it, but rather daily took in more and more of it." Incongruous conceptions occupied his mind. From the standpoint of matured experience he proceeds to distinguish what he found from what he did not find in that philosophy. He found the conception of the Eternal Word or Wisdom of God. Parts of the Fourth Gospel sounded as if identical with this teaching. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God," was a sentence which some at least understood in a Neoplatonic sense—"But that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, I read not there."[2] A doctrine concerning the Word was found in the Greek philosophy. But there was no doctrine to be found there concerning Incarnation. That the Son was in the form of God and equal with God, because of the same substance with God, these philosophers allowed. But that He took the form of a servant, that He died for the ungodly (Incarnation and Atonement), certainly, says Augustine, philosophy knew nothing of all this. It was hidden from the wise.[3]

[1] *Conf.*, vii. 7. [2] *Ibid.*, vii. 14. [3] *Ibid.*, vii. 27.

In this frame of mind he began to study St. Paul. And as he read he seemed to find in the doctrines of Christianity precisely the completion of the truths already ascertained from the most spiritually minded philosophy of the ancient world. The needs of man, which philosophy could not satisfy, were here anticipated and met. The doctrine of Incarnation, as a means to human deliverance, on which philosophy had no message, appealed to his reason as the only conception adequate to the facts of life. The resulting intellectual change is described by him as the difference between being on a mountain top and seeing far off the land of peace, yet finding no way thither, and being on the way itself, guarded by heavenly hosts.

A modern writer declares that "Augustine is the most illustrious representative in history of a process very familiar to our own age, by which men of considerable intellectual activity, wearied with the questionings and scepticisms which they cannot resolve, fall back upon external authority as the only mode of silencing the reason and satisfying the conscience." [1]

This view of Augustine's conversion as a taking refuge in external authority is refuted by the evidence. For there is a process of development, an intellectual series of changes from Dualism to Scepticism, from Scepticism to Pantheism of a mystical character, and thence to Theism and Christianity. Augustine's reflections and criticisms on the doctrine of Incarnation prove convincingly that he employed his reason on the fundamental dogmas of the Church.

Simultaneously with this conversion of the mind there was developing the process of conversion of the *heart*. It consists of one long outpouring of his heart addressed throughout to God. The sustained elevation of thought

[1] Allen, *Continuity of Christian Thought* (1884), p. 3.

is unsurpassed. It reveals a mind habitually accustomed to meditate on the highest of all imaginable themes before the Throne of all existence. It is difficult to say which is most conspicuous, his tender, passionate, adoring love for Jesus Christ, his overwhelming sense of utter worthlessness, or the acute penetration with which he disentangles human motives and exhibits the true character of sin. He could not be severer if the sins were not his own. His grief is bitter because it is himself that he condemns. The sins of his boyhood and of his youth, the indolence, the deceitfulness, the lying tongue, robbing the cupboard at home, unfairness to his playmates, stealing fruit from the orchard, are all recorded and condemned with an unsparing severity which has certainly never been surpassed. With penetrating moral insight he traces out the motives of his sins. He sees in these sins of early days the beginnings which, if unchecked and unconquered, issue finally in the darkest excesses human nature can commit. And the graver sins of the youth and of the man, with what righteous indignation and contempt are these confessed and repudiated. Probably no human being ever penetrated farther into the folds and the recesses of his own inmost self than this great master in spiritual experience. The keen moral sense, the absolute sincerity, the solemn agony of shame, the burning self-reproach, never were these more forcibly felt, more passionately uttered. Perhaps no human being ever read the tear-stained pages of this noble nature's emancipation without himself becoming touched, sobered, if not self-convicted. There are some assertions of our sinfulness which cost us very little to make. But here you feel in reading it that you possess the genuine record.

A more unsparing analysis of stages of a man's own moral growth was surely never written. Early childhood, boyhood, youth, early manhood, maturity: they are all

subjected to scrutiny, and judgment is pronounced upon them. The whole account is characterized, to a perfectly astonishing degree, by sincerity, frankness, refinement and severity. Other men have written narratives of their past lives. But frequently without the element of penitence. The past still clings about and compromises the present. Augustine's penitence enabled him to blend refinement with perfect frankness: a description of sinfulness contaminated by no sensuality. The severity of his self-judgment has even led some critics to suppose that exceptional degradation lay behind his words. No inference could well be more unreasonable. Augustine certainly sank into habitual indulgence and moral irregularities absolutely inconsistent with discipleship of Christ. But, then, it must be remembered that this was in his pagan days. He was not a Christian at that time. He was an Oriental Dualist. If his earlier sins were judged by the standard of contemporary life in a pagan city they would have been regarded as excusable, or at least not very seriously different from the prevailing conduct of young men of the world; indeed far superior to that of many of that class. But the convert to Christianity judged his past by the standard of the religion to which he had been converted.

The Confessions analyze with wonderful fidelity and power the yearnings of human nature after happiness. But the search for happiness is often restricted to created things. And, among these, in directions which conscience condemns. That was what Augustine himself had done. But he declares, as the bitter outcome of personal experience, that no real lasting happiness can be found in unlawful things. The uneasiness, the self-loathing, which ensued were the righteous retribution on an unrighteous search. The path of immoral self-indulgence was beset with thorns, and jealousies, and fear, and anxieties, and

degradations. God appeared to him, "by an unwearied law dispensing penal blindness to lawless desires." [1]

But the search after happiness, while still restricted to created things, might take perfectly innocent and *legitimate* directions. Augustine sought for happiness also in these: in the pursuit of learning, in intellectual companionship, in the cultivation of his æsthetic nature, in human friendship. But here also he was left unsatisfied. No one has written more affectionately than he of the blessedness of human friendship, nor more acutely of its limitations. There came a sense of inadequacy in the best of things purely human. The spirit looked out beyond, because in these it could not be satisfied. The Confessions reveal an intense conviction that nothing but God could ever give lasting contentment to the divinely implanted yearnings of mankind. This was the real meaning of our unrest. In one ever-memorable, often-quoted sentence, to which the heart still vibrates in sympathy, he exclaims: "Thou hast created us for Thyself, and our heart can never rest until it rests in Thee." Thus he came to realize that love toward God must underlie all true love of man. "Blessed is he who loves Thee and his friend in Thee and his enemy because of Thee.[2] For he alone loses none dear to him, to whom all are dear in Him Who cannot be lost. And who is this but our God? . . . Thee we never lose unless we forsake. And if we forsake Thee, whither goeth or whither fleeth he, but from Thy love to Thy displeasure? For where do we fail to find Thy law in our punishment?"

III

There remains Augustine's account of the conversion of *the will*. His self-analysis discloses most pathetically the maladies of the human will. His experience was that

[1] *Conf.*, i. 29. [2] *Ibid.*, iv. 14.

a perverse will increased desire, repeated actions become habit, and habit becomes custom, and custom not resisted becomes necessity. He describes in piteous terms the painful struggles of an irresolute will.[1] How he deliberated about serving God, and postponed decision; how he became like one afflicted with heavy drowsiness unable to shake off sleep; how his answer to the Voice calling "Awake, thou that sleepest," was only dull and drowsy words: "Anon, Anon, presently, leave me a little while. But my little while went on for a long while"; [2] how he experienced that conflict between the higher and the lower self which St. Paul depicts so forcibly in Romans vii.; how his aspiration was "give me chastity, but not yet"; [3] how he found in his divided personality that to will was not to be able, for the will was not entire.[4] He could not concentrate his will in either direction.[5] He neither willed entirely nor refused entirely. He was a monument of indecision, victim of weakness and vacillation, dissatisfied, restless, vexed, self-reproachful, yet procrastinating, until it seemed as if life itself might end before decision was made.

IV

Hitherto we have seen Augustine's account of his conversion solely on its human side, as a gradual movement of his mind and heart and will in the direction of God and the Christian faith. But no man was ever more profoundly convinced than Augustine that conversion cannot be adequately explained merely by analyzing the activities of the human self. There is a point at which all conversion escapes analysis. There is an element in it which is due to superhuman power. Beside the human activity there is an activity which is divine. There is a

[1] *Conf.*, viii. 10. [2] *Ibid.*, viii. 12. [3] *Ibid.*, viii. 17.
[4] *Ibid.*, viii. 20. [5] *Ibid.*, viii. 22.

side in the process where the human agent is also recipient, and co-operates with an influence which is not self-suggestion, but caused by the direct action of the divine personality. This divine aspect of conversion dominates the whole of Augustine's Confessions. He is the supreme exponent of the doctrine of grace. Augustine is overwhelmingly conscious that without the influence of God his conversion had never taken place.

The term Confessions suggests in ordinary English use an acknowledgment of sins. Augustine's use of the term was different. He said in one of his sermons: "We are making confession whether we are praising God or accusing ourselves." [1] There is a confession of sin and also a confession of praise. Augustine regarded accusation of self as praise of God, because the confession of sin is an acknowledgment of deliverance from sin. It is the praise of Him who caused the dead to live. When Augustine entitled this book his Confessions, he meant it to be not only a confession of his own sinfulness, but a confession of gratitude and thanksgiving to God for the grace and power divinely given him. The very form in which the work is composed shows this. It begins with expression of praise. He says elsewhere that his purpose in relating these experiences was to deepen in himself and in his readers the sense that great is the Lord and worthy to be praised.[2]

There had been a wondrous silent, incessant, persistent, relentless effort on the divine side to come into intimate, innermost, personal relationship with His creature. The Grace of God had been at work in every department of his being. To his mind God had given enlightenment, to his heart God had infused love, to his will God had imparted strength. This was the secret of the victorious process of change which had revolutionized his desires

[1] *Sermon*, lxvii. 1, 2. [2] *Conf.*, xi. 1.

and aims and aspirations. The entire course of his self-analysis is illuminated by constant recognition that his change from antagonism to acceptance of Christian principles was due to the grace infused into his innermost self from the Source of all spiritual and religious power. He is not more certain that he has thought and loved and willed than he is that God has dispelled his darkness, quickened his affection, and strengthened his weakness of decision. Hence the prayer of gratitude, "Thou hast broken my bonds asunder. I will offer unto Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving." Hence too the famous sentence, "da quod jubes, et jube quod vis" ("Give grace to do what Thou commandest and then command what Thou wilt").

Thus the Confessions may be said to contain the theology of conversion in the form of a personal experience. And it is just this which gives the book its undying vitality. It is no dry abstract, theoretical treatment of a doctrine, but vibrating with personal emotion, and with the struggles and sorrows of actual life. And it is this which explains its popularity. It is also this which makes Augustine as a theologian so great. His doctrines are also his own experiences. They are not only the conclusions of his intellect: they are also the experiences of his heart.

It was impossible for so brilliantly gifted an intellect to be unconscious of his powers. He could not help perceiving the rapidity with which he grasped philosophic theories which other men slowly and laboriously grew to understand. But neither could he fail to realize that, with all his great abilities, he had been far slower to accept the truth. After all, his intellectual inquiries had brought him back after nine years' wanderings to the religion with which he began. And while we may feel that this matured assent, after many long doubts and

hesitations, qualified him to become what otherwise he would never have been; yet the reflection which his own humility made upon those wanderings was that men of slower understanding had not forsaken the true God and had remained in the secure shelter of the Church.[1]

V

There has been a tendency in popular religious thought to distinguish conversion into two types: the sudden and the gradual. Whether this classification is ever accurate is open to question. In any case it seems impossible to doubt that Augustine's experience was of the latter kind. The analysis which he himself has given in the pages of his Confessions and elsewhere places this fact above dispute. It would be a complete misapprehension to regard his conversion as sudden. There was, of course, a great crisis in the garden at Milan; but that crisis was the culmination of a process which had been long maturing. That process had passed through many stages. Many an influence had contributed to the result. The moral change at his conversion was great, but his severe self-scrutiny in the Soliloquies shows that this cannot be understood to mean that from that moment no struggles and trials awaited him. The intellectual change at his conversion was certainly anything but complete in the memorable scene in the garden. No doubt much was implicitly involved in his surrender to authority, but very much would remain to be supplemented and explicitly drawn out.

It cannot be too plainly said that conversion in Augustine's case was a process continued for a considerable period after the scene in the garden. The reality of the

[1] *Conf.*, iv. 31.

crisis at Milan was proved by the subsequent development—

> "Let no man say that sudden, in a minute,
> All is accomplished and the work is done.
> Though with thine earliest dawn thou shouldst begin it,
> Scarce were it ended in thy setting sun."

It is clear that Augustine's conversion was not to Christianity conceived as ordinary married life, but to Christianity in its ascetic or monastic form. It was this ascetic ideal which had at once attracted and repelled him in St. Ambrose's example. The stories about St. Antony and the monks of the Egyptian desert, the convent outside Milan under Ambrose's direction, of which he heard shortly before his conversion, profoundly attracted him. The preaching of the great Bishop of Milan was strongly in favour of the ascetic life. The influence of the priest Simplician was just the same. Neoplatonist mysticism encouraged, or at least harmonized with, a life of contemplation and aloofness from the ordinary world. It was the contrast between his own self-indulgent, self-centred life and the self-sacrificing, self-effacing life of the religious-minded among his contemporaries which shamed and stung Augustine by the undeniable superiority of their example. His friend Verecundus hesitated to become a Christian chiefly because, being married, he could not become a monk. Life in community, a dedicated life devoted to religious and studious contemplation, had haunted his mind and become the theme of discussion with his friends before the time of his conversion. And after the crisis was passed he began to carry this ideal into effect. He took the monastic ideal with him into Africa. He formed a community there, and lived in a brotherhood of like-minded men to the end of his days. The monastic regulations afterwards ascribed to him may not contain

his directions, but they certainly reproduce his spirit. His conversion was distinctly and definitely to the monastic type.

Conversion resulted in the unity of the soul. Previously to conversion there were experienced the distractions of a divided personality. By conversion Augustine attained to unity. "I collected myself," he says, "from the dispersion wherein I turned from Thee, the One, and was vainly divided." [1] He was previously distracted by contending impulses. Love of self, love of inferior things. Discord was now resolved in harmony.

It may be appropriate here to add that there are two main types into which the religious sentiment is divided: those which concentrate attention primarily on the divine, and those which concentrate upon the human; the theocentric and the anthropocentric types. According to Henri Bremond, who is certainly the principal historian of mysticism, Augustine belongs to the second of these two classes. His chief interest is in God as related to ourselves. The famous sentence, "Thou hast created us for Thyself, and our heart can never rest without it rests in Thee," represents the conception of God as man's beatitude. God is the sovereign good of humanity. He is the remedy for man's unrest—the cause through which human discordance with self is removed. Bremond recognizes that this anthropocentric tendency does not entirely represent the great African's religion. But it is a dominating characteristic. And it is this predominance of the human interest which has given the Confessions their chief attractiveness.[2] There is undoubtedly an element of truth in this. Yet Augustine's Neoplatonism had thoroughly accustomed him to theocentric ideas. And his Soliloquies enlarge with deep devotion on the

[1] *Conf.*, ii. 1.
[2] *Histoire Littéraire du Sentiment Religieux en France* (1921), iii. 25.

thought of Deity in itself, and contemplate the divine attributes and glories for their own sake, and by no means merely for their bearing upon mankind. But he who relates the experience of his own conversion is necessarily constrained to lay the stress on what God has wrought in man, rather than on what God is in His own nature apart from man.

VI

Three concluding reflections may be made on Augustine's Confessions: concerning its *Form*, its *Publication*, and its *Influence*.

Its *form* is remarkable. It is not only self-analysis. It is self-analysis in the form of a prayer. It is a confession made in the presence of men, but it is all directed to the Father in Heaven. He deliberately intends that men shall hear it. He sometimes alludes to the impression which it will make upon them. He reflects that the instructed believer will smile at the quaintness and crudeness of his earlier ideas. But he passes beyond the human listeners, and seems to forget them, and to become luminously conscious of two existences, and only two: God and his own soul. He plies the Eternal with intellectual difficulties, relates everything in the sacred presence, in all the varying strains of penitence, shame, thanksgiving, adoration, praise. The book is one long, direct outpouring of the mind and heart to God. Few books anywhere outside Scripture show more convincingly the naturalness and reality of personal communion with God than these wonderful pages. Nothing he ever wrote—and he has written numerous passages of exquisite spiritual insight—reveal so profoundly the intensity of his personal religion as these Confessions. It is all obviously an expression of the habitual level upon which the writer's

inner life was dwelling. It is no exaggeration to think that few even among the spiritually minded could have written upon such a subject in such a way. It is different, very different, from the cold and passionless austerity of the Imitation. It is an intensely human document of frailties, struggles and sins. It is also the passionate love of one greatly forgiven and risen to great heights. It is not only a confession of his sins; it is also a thanksgiving for God's grace. It is the ascription to the Eternal of the conversion which He has wrought. For whatever subordinate and accessory agencies may have been employed, whether Greek thought or Christian writings, whether Monnica or Ambrose or Simplician, or any other, behind all these, utilizing all these, and making them effective, was the one Power who alone can convert. The divine has wrought this change within the human: to Him therefore the thankfulness of the creature must be directed. So the Confessions overflow with gratitude, and thanksgiving, and religious love. Mingled with the sense of wasted years and delayed response to the love which created him, are the extraordinary relief and peace which conversion to Christ has brought. No language within his power can express the grandeur of God's love to him. "Too late have I loved Thee, O Eternal Loveliness." And "Væ tacentibus de Te quoniam loquaces muti sunt." [1]

Then as to the *publication* of these Confessions. To write this self-analysis was one thing. To publish it was another. Many men have kept a *journal intime*, but under lock and key; often with no idea whatever of publication to the world, or, if at all, at any rate only after their decease. There is much truth in what Dostoievsky says in his novel *A Raw Youth*, "One must be too disgustingly in love with self to be able without shame to write about

[1] *Conf.*, x. 38.

oneself. . . . To drag forth into the literary market-place the inmost secrets of my soul, and an artistic description of my feelings, I should regard as indecent and contemptible." For many a writer it would be nothing less and little else. They are not in the smallest degree qualified to do it. In many cases where what professes to be the inner self has been published there is obviously far too little real self-knowledge to make the writer's estimate of self convincing. The one outstanding feature is how ignorant of self the writer was, how little the self described was really understood. Constantly, moreover, the level of self-judgment is commonplace and low. Hence the result is no deep analysis of self, no disentangling the complexity of motives, no adequate estimate of personal unworthiness, because there is so little religious depth about it. The difficulties and dangers of such a deed throw up into peculiar relief the wonderful nature of Augustine's achievement.

It is, moreover, a thing which many men could not, for their own sakes, be safely trusted to do. It would require exceptional delicacy and refinement not to do danger to the souls of others by publishing the facts of one's own past before the world. There are confessions of themselves which men have published, concerning which it has been pronounced that it is difficult to read them without being more or less contaminated by the record. There are the obvious risks of unreality when writing in deliberate self-consciousness that what one writes is intended for the public gaze. There is an indelicacy in unreserved self-revelation.

Reluctantly a man will consent that the world should know his innermost defects. The very thought of such publicity would compromise the sincerity of his self-revealing. Many motives would tend this way. For the experiences might appear too personal and sacred for

the vulgar gaze; too humiliating to the narrator if known while he was living; too liable to misconstruction and misinterpretation; too easily convertible to ill-natured or perverse misuse. Self-revelation before a cynical or heartless crowd is a daring experiment which a man may live to regret. And Augustine was not blind to these dangerous or painful possibilities. "What have I to do with human beings that they should hear my Confessions as though they could heal all my infirmities. They are a race inquisitive to know the life of another, indifferent to improve their own. Why should they seek to hear from me what I am, when they will not hear from Thee what they are?" [1]

Yet he had no hesitation in publishing his Confessions to the world. To his mind the act was in some sort an act of reparation for the past. Or rather, as formerly he was not ashamed to publish his own blasphemies in the hearing of men, so now he was not ashamed to confess the divine mercies bestowed upon him.[2]

> "To whom am I declaring this? Not to Thee, my God, but before Thee to my own race, to the human race, or that small portion of it which may encounter these writings of mine. And to what purpose? In order that I and whosoever reads these things may consider out of what depths we are to cry unto Thee." [3]

One reason which prompted Augustine, if not to write, at any rate to publish, his Confessions, was that the story of his early life was being misrepresented and distorted by his opponents, the Donatists and the Manichæans. It was easy for malicious hostility to do this. His disorderly career had been spent in Africa's chief city. His appear-

[1] *Conf.*, x. 3. [2] *Ibid.*, iv. 16. [3] *Ibid.*, ii. 3.

ance as a Bishop of the Church prompted his adversaries to make the worst of his student days.

Augustine's main purpose in publishing his Confessions was undoubtedly edification. He published the book after years of preaching and dealing with penitents. He had exercised the ministry of consolation. Nothing could be better calculated to encourage the despairing and to comfort the weak-hearted than to hear what grace had done for a soul after many years of separation from our Lord. So he wrote in order " that whosoever reads these things may consider out of what depths we are to cry unto Thee." It is done in order to promote the conversion of others. If God had done all this for Augustine, so He would for others also.

The good delight to hear of past evils, not because they are evils, but because they are past. " Let the brotherly mind love in me what Thou teachest is to be loved, and lament in me what Thou teachest is to be lamented." [1] But if the reading of these Confessions is to conduce to edifying, the reader must come with " a brotherly mind ": not with the mind of a stranger. The brotherly mind when it approves rejoices for me, and when it disapproves grieves for me, because whether it approves or disapproves, it loves me.

So Augustine, now in mature life, a Bishop in the Church of Christ, casts himself at the feet of God in the hearing of humanity: before his own age and generation first, his clergy, his converts, his people, his pagan neighbours, his enemies; knowing, as he must have known, the use which might be made of such avowals, he poured out simply his whole self, in such terrible anguish, such scourging language of self-contempt and self-abasement, as has never been surpassed in all literature. And not before his own age alone, but before all centuries, is this

[1] *Conf.*, x. 3, 4, 5.

overwhelming confession outpoured. Certainly the man who could confess before the world in the manner Augustine confessed would hold it an easy thing indeed to pour the tale of his sorrows and sins into the ears of a single priest.

Augustine did not even rest content with letting the world into the secrets of his inner life through the pages of his Confessions. One day in the City of Carthage, the very city where he had lived so differently in his unconverted days, he entered the pulpit and declared what his former life had been. "I was myself," he exclaimed, "as the Apostle describes, sometimes foolish and unbelieving and unto every good work reprobate. I was deluded and infatuated most perversely in error. I do not deny it. And in proportion as I do not deny what I was, I praise God, who has not laid these things to my charge. . . . Do you despise me for my past misdoings? I am more severe towards them than you can be. What you despise I have long ago condemned. Oh that you would but imitate me, that one day your errors also might be a thing of the past! These are past misdoings, misdoings principally committed here in this city. It was here I lived wickedly, as I myself confess. And in proportion as I rejoice on account of the grace of God, so on account of my past misconduct, do I—what shall I say? Grieve? I should grieve indeed if they were in existence still. But what shall I say? Do I rejoice? I cannot say that. O that I had never been what once I was! But whatever I was, that, in Christ's Name, is a thing of the past." [1]

The deep humility of that simple avowal could scarcely fail to take profound effect. And it so happened that a young man was present that day in the church who for a long time had struggled with himself to come to a decision about the religious life. Augustine's words that day so

[1] *Enarrat. in Psalm xxxvi.*, Part 3.

roused and moved him that he registered a solemn resolution to devote himself to religious life: a resolution which he carried into effect. This young man was afterwards known to the Catholic world as St. Fulgentius.[1]

The publication of the Confessions produced an immense effect. Its *influence* was rapid and extensive from the first day of its appearance. It became the most popular of Augustine's writings during his lifetime, as he himself narrates.[2] When sending a copy to a distinguished personage, Augustine wrote: "Accept the books containing my Confessions which you desired to have. In these behold me that you may not praise me beyond what I am. In these believe what is said of me not by others, but by myself. In these contemplate me and see what I have been in myself by myself. And if anything in me please you, join me, because of it, in praising Him to whom, and not to myself, I desire praise to be given. For He both made us and not we ourselves; indeed we had destroyed ourselves, but He who made us has made us anew."[3]

There can be little doubt that the publication of the Confessions *impressed* powerfully *upon the popular mind the divine side in conversion.* The powerlessness of the human will to effect its own conversion, the absolute necessity of Grace, is the fundamental doctrine of the book. And it is perfectly natural that the first beginnings of the Pelagian controversy are heard in an attempt to refute a famous passage in the Confessions. It was the prayer, "Give what Thou commandest and then command what Thou wilt," which, in its strong insistence on the necessity of grace, seemed to Pelagius to disparage the freedom of the human will. Augustine himself, on hearing that Pelagius rejected the words, wrote in self-defence as

[1] *Lib. Fathers. Aug. Psalms*, transl., ii. p. 1.
[2] *De Dono Persev.*, xx. [3] *Ep.*, ccxxxi.

follows: What does God command chiefly and first of all but this, that we should believe in Him? And faith is precisely what God gives, if we rightly pray, Give what Thou commandest. It was God who converted him to that religion which his miserable and aggressive disputativeness was laying waste. This ascription of all the blessedness of his conversion to the power of the Grace of God brought the doctrine of divine help into impressive prominence and popularity. Ordinary men who would not follow the acute dialectic of his anti-Pelagian treatises could readily understand the doctrine of grace as shown in the concrete instance of Augustine's own conversion.

The dominant thought which the Confessions impresses on the reader's mind, and is intended to impress can hardly be better worded than in the language of St. Fulgentius.[1] "This, then, the Grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ effects: it turns the foolish into wise, it bestows faith upon the faithless, it not only calls the wandering back to life, but recalls them from perverse desires; and when earthly yearnings are expelled, it inspires them with a desire for the Heavenly Kingdom, and when the longing after pleasure of the senses is taken away, it infuses the gift of delight and desire for spiritual things. It roots out evil and inserts goodness in its stead."

It would be an impossible task to measure the influence of this great masterpiece of spiritual analysis on the subsequent generations of the men who have read and studied its wonderful contents. But it is very striking to read the tributes of admiration from most diverse and unexpected sources, at times from standpoints very remote from the writer's own.

The Confessions have ever been a favourite manual of devotional reading, especially in the Catholic world. It

[1] *De Veritate Prædest.* i. 43.

would be very interesting, were it possible, to compare its influence with that of the Imitation. The unearthly aloofness of the latter has produced wonderful effects. But the intensely human sympathy of the former has a constraining appeal all its own.

St. Theresa found in Augustine's pages exactly what her soul required. "About the same time," says St. Theresa in her autobiography, "they gave me the Confessions of St. Augustine. I do not doubt that this happened by the special intention of our Lord; for I did not seek to possess the book, and I had never read it. I had peculiar veneration for St. Augustine: partly because the convent where I was placed belonged to his order; but also because he had been a sinful soul. I derived a keen consolation from saints whom our Lord had called from distant ways of sin. It seemed to me that I ought to find support in them. If the Lord had extended forgiveness to them, He could also grant the same to me. One thought only disconcerted me, it is that God had called them once and they continued faithful, whereas He had called me many a time and always in vain. It was this that troubled me. Nevertheless, remembering the tender love He bore me, I felt my confidence restored. However often I distrusted myself, I never distrusted His mercy."

St. Theresa goes on to describe her experience on reading the Confessions. "No sooner had I begun to read this book of the Confessions than I seemed to find myself depicted. At length I read the pages of his conversion. I read the words which he heard when in the garden, that heavenly vision so penetrating and so sweet. My heart yielded. It was conquered. It seemed to me that God had caused the same voice to sound in the depth of my own soul." [1]

[1] *Autobiography*, Chap. ix. *Œuvres de St. Thérèse*, Marcel Bouix (1857), i. 112.

"He speaks in such a way as to bring tears to the eyes of those who study him," writes St. Francis de Sales. "I know not which to admire most," says the same attractive Bishop, "whether the sincerity with which he deplores his sins, or the admirable way he describes that which he felt when God had touched his heart" [1].

[1] *Works*, Vivès. 1872. V. 243, 255.

CHAPTER XXI

AUGUSTINE'S MATURED THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD

THE changes through which Augustine passed in his conceptions concerning God render it advisable to recall his finally matured expositions. These are given in his great treatise about the Holy Trinity. The two foundations of all Christian theology are, of course, the doctrine of the Person of Christ, and the doctrine of the distinctions in the Being of Deity. In this treatise, which was written at intervals over at least fifteen years beginning from the year 400, Augustine records his deepest reflections on the Incarnation and the Holy Trinity.

With regard to the Incarnation, Augustine dwells repeatedly on the passage in Philippians, on the contrast between the form of God and the form of a servant, remarking that the Son "did not so take the form of a servant as that He should lose the form of God in which He was equal to the Father." Concerning the Son of God, the rule for interpreting Scripture is that we must distinguish between what relates to the form of God in which our Lord is equal to the Father, and what relates to the form of a servant which He took and in which He is less than the Father.[1] This distinction Augustine illustrates by examples:—

"According to the form of God all things were made by Him:
According to the form of a servant He was Himself made of a woman.

[1] *De Trin.*, i. 22.

According to the form of God He and the Father are one:
According to the form of a servant He came not to do His own will but the will of Him that sent Him. . . .
According to the form of God He is the true God and eternal life:
According to the form of a servant He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."

Thus the teaching of Scripture and of the Catholic exponents of it is that the Son of God is both equal to the Father according to the form of God in which He exists, and less than the Father according to the form of a servant which he assumed. And in taking the form of a servant He did not lose the form of God.[1]

Thus the Incarnation involves the self-humiliation of God. This mystery, this sacrifice, this priest, was God before He came into the world, and then was born of a woman.[2] The Word of God is the Son of God who became the Son of Man, the Mediator between God and humanity.[3] He is equal to the Father through the unity of the godhead and partaker with us by the assumption of humanity. He is consubstantial with the Father.[4] In the Incarnation man was united with the Word of God so as to be one Person.

Augustine is profoundly impressed with the Johannine sentences. "I and my Father are one," means one in essence as well as in will. The sentence, "*We* will come unto him and make our abode with him," is evidently to Augustine in sublime and awe-inspiring harmony with this doctrine of essential unity between the Son and the Father. This association of Himself with the Father in terms of perfect equality as coming to the believing soul—"*we* will come unto him"—implies the Catholic doctrine

[1] *De Trin.*, ii. 2.
[2] *Ibid.*, iv. 11.
[3] *Ibid.*, iv. 12.
[4] *Ibid.*, iv. 30.

that the Speaker is the Eternal Son.[1] Thus Augustine does not hesitate quite plainly to say that "God was born of a woman."[2] Or again, "He who is by nature the Son of God was made the Son of Man through mercy for the sake of the sons of men."[3] Or again, the Father "willed that the Only-Begotten Son, God co-eternal with Himself, should become man, by putting on a human soul and flesh, and being made mortal to endure death."[4] Or again, "Remaining what he was in Himself, and receiving from us and for us what He was not, apart from any loss of His own nature."[5] Thus "He that spared not His own Son" is understood quite literally. Augustine questioned[6] whether in Scripture the expression "they are one" is ever applied to beings whose nature is different. Thus, "I came forth from the Father" means, I have not appeared in that form in which I am equal to the Father, but otherwise; that is, as less than the Father in the creature which I have taken upon Me.[7]

This doctrine of the Incarnation is not given in one systematic exposition, but scattered up and down in fragments over the whole treatise on "The Holy Trinity." For that very reason it was unmistakably present to the greater writer's mind in all that he says about the Trinity.

Augustine tells us that the Catholic Expositors of the Bible whose writings have come within his reach maintain that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are a divine unity of one and the same substance in an indivisible equality; and therefore that They are not three gods but one God.[8] Accordingly, he affirms, but not as if the words were necessarily his own, that "the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit God, and yet that this Trinity is not three gods, but one God."[9] And

[1] *De Trin.*, cvii. 12. [2] *Ibid.*, viii. 7. [3] *Ibid.*, xiii. 12.
[4] *Ibid.*, xiii. 13. [5] *Ibid.*, xiii. 20. [6] *Ibid.*, vi. 4.
[7] *Ibid.*, i. 21. [8] *Ibid.*, i. 7. [9] *Ibid.*, i. 8.

elsewhere, "The Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Spirit Almighty: yet not three Almighties, but one Almighty."[1] Sentences like these either come from a creed already in existence, or else they are surely the beginnings of that systematic exposition completed in the Quicunque Vult.

It is always characteristic of Augustine's mind that he starts an idea, interrupts it, and resumes it after a while. The profusion of his ideas and the rush of his thoughts are too great to yield themselves easily to systematic construction. But his teaching on the Trinity can be grouped in two main divisions: the traditional and the speculative. On the one side we find brief expositions of the Church's doctrine; on the other side continual reiterated endeavours to bring into intellectual harmony the Unity and the Trinity. The effect of the constant intermingling of these two contrasted principles, the authority of the Church and the arguments of the reason, is curious and at times confusing. The whole treatise would, of course, have been much clearer if the two had been grouped apart. As it is, the transitions are frequent and rapid, with the result that it is less easy to be sure that one has grasped the great writer's mind.

With regard to the terminology adopted by the Church, he inquires,[2] Why does not the doctrine of the Trinity involve the assertion that there are three Gods? The Father is a Person, and the Son is a Person, and the Holy Spirit is a Person; therefore there are Three Persons. But the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God: why, then, do we not say that there are three Gods? Is it, he asks, because the Scripture does not say three Gods? But neither do we find the Scripture anywhere describing the Three as Three Persons. His answer is that the terminology arose from the necessity of saying

[1] *De Trin.*, v. 9. [2] *Ibid.*, vii. 8.

something against the erroneous theories which undermined the Church's doctrine. The Church was afraid to say three essences, for fear that anybody should understand it to imply a separation within the unity. Neither could the Church say that there were not three somewhats in Deity; for it was by saying this that Sabellius fell into heresy. For, says Augustine, it is most assuredly known, and is to be devoutly believed, that there is the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that the Son is not the same as the Father, nor the Holy Spirit the same either as the Father or the Son. Accordingly, the Church sought to determine through what it could describe the Holy Three. And it fixed upon the term three Subsistences (substantiæ) or three Persons.[1] The purpose of this terminology being not to affirm separation, but to deny singularity (" non diversitatem intelligi voluit, sed singularitatem noluit "). Augustine's language is so condensed that it is not easy to do it justice without considerable expansion. What he appears to mean is that the Church in adopting the expression " Three Persons " was neither dividing the divine Essence into three separate deities, nor confusing its inner distinctions by merging them into one solitary Person. At the same time, Augustine is persuaded of the inadequacy of all human speech about the Trinity. We say, Three Persons, because we require some expression to represent it, " that we might not be altogether silent when asked what three, while we contend that they are three " (" ne omnino taceremus interrogati ").[2] This often-quoted sentence is sometimes understood as if Augustine thought that the expression " Three Persons " was inadequate as other expressions are not when applied to Deity. It should, however, be remarked that no writer has been more profoundly convinced of the inadequacy of all human expressions about God. He has

[1] *De Trin.*, vii. 9. [2] *Ibid.*, vii. 11.

insisted on this repeatedly. "God is more truly conceived than described, and exists more truly than He is conceived." [1] The limitations of human power in speaking of Deity were constantly present in Augustine's mind. It is no small advance towards knowledge, he says elsewhere, before we know what God is, to know what He is not.[2] Moreover, there is his famous sentence in a sermon, "I speak of God. You do not comprehend. If you did comprehend it would not be God of whom I should be speaking." And again, in the present treatise, "Our thought when we think of God the Trinity falls (as we feel) very far short of Him of whom we think, nor comprehends Him as He is." [3]

The series of illustrations of the Trinity which Augustine derives from psychology, such as memory, understanding and will, or mind and love, and knowledge, which he calls the trinities of thought, is discussed at considerable length.[4] But Augustine is quite clear about their inadequacy.[5] They are distinctions within a man; they are his properties, but they are not the man. But we cannot say that the Trinity is in such a manner in God, as to be somewhat belonging to God, and not Itself God.

Where Augustine rises immeasurably above all this analysis of the single human life is in his analysis of the nature of love. There are three elements in love: "he that loves, that which is loved, and love." [6] What, then, is love but that which unites him who loves to the object of his love? Following out this train of thought in its application to Deity, Augustine finds there the plainest revelation of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. For the deepest of all things that can be said of Deity is that God is love. There is in God, the Lover, the Beloved, and the love which unites them.[7] Rashdall's criticism on this analysis is that

[1] *De Trin.*, vii. 7. [2] *Ibid.*, viii. 3. [3] *Ibid.*, v. 1. [4] *Ibid.*, xi. 11.
[5] *Ibid.*, xv. 11. [6] *Ibid.*, viii. 14. [7] *Ibid.*, viii. 14.

" nobody can possibly think of the love of one spiritual being for another as a Person in the modern sense of the term." [1] The conclusion which he draws from this is that since love is impersonal, the Holy Spirit cannot be a Person. Even so that does not remove the fact that Augustine ascribes personal relations of mutual love to the Father and the Son. Moreover, Augustine is concerned with an analysis of love as known among human beings, and on that basis is offering subtle suggestions that love in Deity transcends in nature what exists in the creatures. What, then, is love? Augustine asks.[2] " It is a certain life which couples together two things, namely, him who loves and that which is loved." But then he goes on to say, " It remains to ascend from hence, and to seek those things which are above, as far as is given to man." Then he begins the next book of his great work with the reminder,[3] " We certainly seek a Trinity—not any Trinity, but that Trinity which is God, and the true and supreme and only God. Let my hearers then wait, for we are still seeking." He proceeds with a brief exposition of the Church's faith: " Let us believe that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one God, creator and ruler of the entire creation; and that the Father is not the Son, nor the Holy Spirit either the Father or the Son, but a Trinity of Persons mutually inter-related, and a unity of an equal essence."

Augustine had already, in an earlier part of the treatise, inquired, " What is the Holy Spirit? Whatever it is," replies Augustine, " it is something common both to the Father and the Son." " But that communion itself is consubstantial and coeternal. And if it may fitly be called friendship, let it be so called; but it is more aptly called love." [4] " And therefore they are not more than Three:

[1] *Ideas and Ideals*, p. 175.
[2] *De Trin.*, viii. 14.
[3] *Ibid.*, x. 1.
[4] *Ibid.*, vi. 7.

One who loves Him who is from Himself, and One who loves Him from whom He is, and love itself. And if this last is nothing, how is God love? If it is not substance, how is God substance?" Thus Augustine realizes that in Deity there is the Lover, the Beloved, and the Love which unites them. And it is a relation of mutual intelligence, since it may be described as friendship. Love, therefore, is not a mere abstraction, but an intelligent Being. This is further proved in that deeply significant phrase "a Trinity of Persons mutually inter-related, and a unity of an equal essence." [1] The Holy Spirit is "a mutual love, wherewith the Father and the Son reciprocally love one another." [2] Or again, the Holy Spirit "is a kind of consubstantial communion of Father and Son." [3] It is therefore clear that Augustine applies the term Person to the Holy Spirit in the same sense in which he applies it to the Father and to the Son. He speaks, as we have seen, of "friendship" between the Holy Three within the Unity. Each is a conscious self.

It has been complained that Augustine's great treatise on the Holy Trinity "is full of obscurities, inconsistencies, and unintelligibilities." [4] There is, no doubt, ground for this complaint. The explanation of it is that Augustine is concerned with two different purposes: he is concerned both to expound the traditional doctrine of the Church, and to give such intellectual theorising of the problem involved in the doctrine as lay within his power. Thus authority requiring faith, and the inquiring reason requiring demonstration, the traditional and the speculative, are occupying Augustine's interests all through. On the one hand he gives complete assent to the Church's dogmas of Incarnation and the Trinity within the Unity of God; on the other, he allows himself unrestricted freedom of

[1] *De Trin.*, ix. 1. [2] *Ibid.*, xv. 27. [3] *Ibid.*, xv. 50.
[4] Rashdall, *Ideas and Ideals*, p. 176.

speculative inquiry and rationalizing investigation. In these speculative discussions he is, no doubt, still influenced unconsciously by his Neoplatonist antecedents. He permits himself to propound propositions quite irreconcilable with the dogmas of the Church. Nevertheless he is always in ultimate intention subject to the authority of the historic faith. His wonderfully profound analysis of love and of the doctrine that God is love is the clearest proof of his identity with the traditional conception of the Trinity in Unity. It is no accident that the phrases incorporated in the Athanasian formula are affirmed by Augustine. And therefore to quote his statement that we say Three Persons not so much for the purpose of affirming this as because we are unable to say nothing, to quote this and to omit His description of Deity, as the Lover and the Beloved, and the love which unites them, is plainly to do most inadequate justice to the great writer's thoughts and intentions.

DATES OF THE CHIEF TREATISES MENTIONED

386 Contra Academicus.
De Beata Vita.
De Ordine.
387 Soliloquiorum Libri Duo.
De Immortalitate Animæ.
388 De Quantitate Animæ.
389 De Musica.
De Magistro.
395 De Libro Arbitrio.
389 De Moribus Ecclesiæ Catholicæ.
De Moribus Manichæorum.
390 De Vera Religione.
386–395 Epistolæ i–xxx.

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